

UNIVERSAL  
LIBRARY



107 433

UNIVERSAL  
LIBRARY











---

---

## **BOOKS BY LESLIE D. WEATHERHEAD**

---

THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME  
THE ETERNAL VOICE  
AFTER DEATH  
THE AFTERWORLD OF THE POETS  
THE TRANSFORMING FRIENDSHIP  
PSYCHOLOGY IN SERVICE OF THE SOUL  
JESUS AND OURSELVES  
THE MASTERY OF SEX  
HIS LIFE AND OURS  
HOW CAN I FIND GOD?  
DISCIPLESHIP  
PSYCHOLOGY AND LIFE  
WHY DO MEN SUFFER?  
IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE  
A SHEPHERD REMEMBERS

---

# **Thinking Aloud in War-Time**

**LESLIE D. WEATHERHEAD**

**ABINGDON-COKESBURY PRESS  
NEW YORK                    NASHVILLE**

**Copyright, 1940, by  
LESLIE D. WEATHERHEAD**

All rights reserved—no part of this book  
may be reproduced in any form without  
permission in writing from the publishers,  
except by a reviewer who wishes to quote  
brief passages in connection with a re-  
view written for inclusion in magazine or  
newspaper.

## **CONTENTS**

<b>CHAPTER</b>		<b>PAGE</b>
I. "WAR IS BEASTLY" . . . . .		7
II. "SO WHY NOT PACIFISM?" . . . . .		19
III. "BUT WHAT WILL KILLING ACCOMPLISH?"		31
IV. "SO WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN TO DO?" . . . . .		42
V. "WHERE DOES THE CHURCH COME IN?" . . . . .		53
VI. LET'S TRY TO UNDERSTAND THE ENEMY . . . . .		63
VII. CAN WE PRAY ABOUT WAR? . . . . .		78
VIII. CAN GOD VINDICATE HIMSELF? . . . . .		96
IX. THE VALUES WAR CANNOT TOUCH . . . . .		121



## CHAPTER I

### "WAR IS BEASTLY"

In the second month of the Great War which broke out in 1914, a friend of mine went out as a chaplain to France. He was quickly in action. Very soon came the poignant experience of having a man die in his arms. The chaplain bent over him to catch his painfully spoken words. They were not about himself. They were nothing to do with religion. He was thinking of a life still unborn. His wife was expecting a baby at Christmas. The soldier died thanking God that if the child were a boy he would never have to go through the hell of war. For that was the war to end war. If that baby were a boy, he is now of military age. He is probably in uniform. The guns are calling again and will not be denied.

"You must forgive my breaking down," said an old man, sitting, with grief-stricken, sorrow-lined face, in the corner of a railway carriage; "my five splendid sons have all been killed in France, and our loss has driven their mother insane. I have just been to visit her."

I once attended an Armistice-tide service in a crowded church in Berlin shortly after the Great War ended—if it is ended. Next to me stood a German woman in deep black. During the silence I could hear her sobbing. I can shut my eyes now and go back in imagination to that hushed, crowded place. I can hear her sobs and see her white, drawn face. Her man too died in the war to end war. So did ten million others.

The Great War lasted 16,000 days. On *each day* 7,000 men were killed and 14,000 wounded. Nine million children were made orphans. Five million

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

women were made widows. Thousands were driven mad. Hundreds are still suffering in body or mind or both. Then a so-called conference was held, and the terms dictated were so crushing that our present troubles are to a large extent due to the reaction of a proud people to the intolerable humiliation which we imposed upon a defeated enemy.

Now we are at war again. The grim madness has again seized us. No wonder the minds of people are bewildered, especially Christian people, who know that war is a denial of nearly all the things they hold most precious. They feel it ought not to be. They feel the reproach of those around them who use the national sorrow as a weapon against the power of Christ, and ask what good religion can be if this is possible after nearly two thousand years of Christian teaching.

Yet the Christian—like those around him—is caught up in it all, wonders with sorrow-laden heart what more could have been done. Ought we to have prayed more? Yet in one league of prayer alone over a million members were praying daily for peace. Doesn't prayer make any difference? Or should we have *done* more?—and, if so, what? Have we all been too complacent? Have we wanted the things that peace brings without stirring ourselves to want the things that bring peace? Yet, there is so little the ordinary man can do but join a peace society and say his prayers. Some of us labored to make contacts with German Christians, but the one word "crisis" sent us home perforce, and the little we tried to do is swept away in tides of feeling and the coercive power of governments. So our minds go round and round until we can't think any more.

I have no panacea of easy application, but I have been invited to think aloud, as it were, in these pages,

## "WAR IS BEASTLY"

in the hope that some may feel their way to a quiet mind and see the glimmer of a road through all the confusion of this mad world. It helps some folk to follow the thought-road of another. That is all I can hope for here.

I am afraid I only started to think seriously about war when the last war was over. When it broke out I was twenty, and more irresponsible than most. I remember being examined by a doctor and told I should be rejected on medical grounds, and being at the time rather relieved. I was at college in London and wanted to get on with my work.

Then, when in India, there came a revulsion of feeling. I tried to join the Indian Army as a subaltern, and remember half hoping that the war wouldn't be over before my commission came through! It did come through, and I was gazetted Second Lieutenant, then Lieutenant and Acting Captain, had some experience on the staff of the Political Department in Mesopotamia, and finally served as Chaplain. But this is not the place to enlarge on that unimportant phase.

I got back to England in 1922 and began to think furiously about the whole problem of war. I found myself moving toward pacifism because I had seen the beastliness and waste and evil of war. However one looked at it, it seemed evil, although I could not exclude from my mind, even then, the possibility that it might be the lesser of two evils. It was wrong, though it might be the lesser of two wrongs. I find that in an article published in *The Methodist Recorder*, on November 11, 1929, that was the position I had reached. Later, however, I was drawn nearer to the pacifist position as my mind contemplated the evil of war, but I was tortured in the conflict set up by

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

the duty to the community on the one hand, which urges one to protect it, and by what appeared to be the duty of the individual, on the other hand, which, for the Christian, would seem to be nonresistance.

The issue is so tremendous that I am not ashamed to reveal the movement of my mind first in one direction and then in another. Anyone who can make up his mind in a few minutes exactly where his duty lies in this matter would seem to me to run the risk of being satisfied with shallow thinking. There are so many complications. I heard no less a thinker than Dr. Scott Lidgett call this problem the most difficult in personal philosophy which any man can set himself.

Some considerations move strongly toward pacifism.

Think for one moment of the question of waste. The waste of money is bad enough. The British Exchequer during the Great War paid out about 47,950 million dollars, and one thinks with some longing of what even a small part of that money might have done in splendid enterprises such as cancer research, always hindered for lack of funds. We lent to our Allies about 10,390 million dollars and we lost at sea in shipping value 3,750 million dollars. But these figures are nothing compared with the waste of men. Of British subjects nine and one-half million served in the Army, Navy, and Air Force, and one tenth were killed, between one fifth and one quarter wounded, apart from 22,000 civilians killed or drowned at sea by enemy action. France lost 1,400,000, Germany 1,600,000, and Russia 1,700,000. When the toll includes Armenians, Syrians, and Greeks, massacred by the Turks, we have to add another four million.

The trouble about these figures is that one cannot receive them into the mind. What mind can receive the thought of a death-roll of ten million men? If

## "WAR IS BEASTLY"

we see a boy run over in the street, by a terrible paradox we are moved more than by the multiplication of that horror by several million. If once civilization could receive the idea of the waste of life in the Great War, war would surely be as much a thing of the past as cannibalism. The thought now of the young men of all the nations, with the brightness of the morning in their hearts, the light of dawn in their eyes, the song of hope on their lips; men who represented the promise of the world, men intended by God to carry the torch of man's progress and to bring advancement, prosperity and peace in industry, science, and religion, to solve the riddles of pain, oppression and unrest; men who had no quarrel with each other, going out to slay each other in mud and blood, is a thought which almost paralyzes the heart. Instead of progress, death; instead of the defeat of pain, those beautiful bodies maimed and broken; instead of the solution of problems, more problems, and minds tortured in many cases into madness! Surely, if a nation could realize this, there would be an end of that insanity which we call war.

Apart from the waste involved, war rouses all the worst passions contained in human personality. Hundreds of men who got through alive wear the scars on their souls, if not on their bodies. Hundreds of youngsters went out with only the frailest hold on religion. War soon grinningly wrenched them from their hold. Hundreds who today would have been office-bearers in our churches are—God knows where. "Even a righteous war," wrote the late F. A. Atkins, "can be guaranteed to send thousands down the slopes of hell. No amount of right at the beginning can save a nation from an orgy of trespass, arson, robbery, rape, adultery, lying, and murder." We dress war up in a tinsel

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

grandeur and glory, and certainly splendid qualities are called out—qualities of courage and sacrifice. But when one sits down to think dispassionately, one knows that the very medals awarded for valor involve the whole machinery of murder and mutilation, tears and treachery, lust and lies. Men I know who have been decorated were kept awake at night twenty years later by the memory of the deeds which won their medals.

This will seem strong language to many. My reply is that many have never looked along the sights of a rifle until some person they have been taught to regard as an enemy blocks the end sight. They have never felt the surging of primeval passion and lust to kill rush irresistibly over their whole being as they have pulled the trigger and blown some gentle, kindly, fatherly German toymaker, who loves Grimm's fairy tales and Wagner's music, into a hell of pain that closes with a tortured death. They have never seen a man's face while a bayonet was being driven into his abdomen and twisted round, and a nailed boot pressed on his throat while it was pulled out. All they have seen is a regiment marching past with boyish voices singing, "It's a long way to Tipperary," and jolly, laughing faces revealing those wonderful spirits that even war cannot crush. Or they have seen men on parade march past a flamboyant general wearing a string of medals, and their pulses have been stirred by brass bands, bright uniforms, waving banners and all the thrilling panoply of force that stirs something primeval within us. In a sentence, they have seen men playing at soldiers, but they have never seen war. When you have seen your college chum with his intestines hanging on barbed wire, or your schoolmate running round in circles screaming, with part of his face, including one eye, blown away, then you have seen war between two

## "WAR IS BEASTLY"

civilized and nominally Christian countries. "When all was over," said Mr. Winston Churchill, referring to the Great War, "torture and cannibalism were the only two expedients that the civilized, scientific Christian States had been able to deny themselves, and these were of doubtful utility."

The waste is bad enough, the passions let loose are worse, but the irrelevant factor of war is perhaps the most galling of all. I well remember a great Christian leader of our Church, who did not himself join the army, saying to me, "If a woman lives alone in the next house to you, and her house is raided by some great bully and she is outraged and her goods stolen, your Christian duty is not to say your prayers, but to restrain him by force." I think it was that conversation that took me into the war as a combatant officer. I can see now how irrelevant that argument is. War may be justifiable as the lesser of two terrible evils, but that particular illustration simply does not hold. When I go to war I do not get anywhere near those who are responsible for war. All I do is, either to be wiped out myself, or to wipe out a peace-loving German with whom I have no quarrel, who probably loves his wife and children as I love mine, and who probably worships the same God as I do.

It may be that to restrain the bully, all I can do is to restrain those who, willingly or unwillingly, become his instruments, but the argument, to be cogent, needs stating far more carefully.

Another thought made me miserable. In the Great War not only were men roused by lying propaganda, twisted Press reports, and clumsy stories of alleged atrocities—which, of course, only the enemy was supposed to have perpetrated—but women and girls went

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

into factories to make explosive shells which would smash the bodies of other women's husbands and sons and sweethearts into unrecognizable pulp. If any men took a definite pacifist position—a position many of them took through taking the words of Jesus seriously—they were thrown into prison, where many died and where others went mad. Even the churches became, in many cases, almost as militant as the Prussians themselves; and at last, when all the slaughter and misery and sorrow had run their full course, a conference was held which ought to have been held at the beginning. What a beastly thing war was! That, I think, was my prevailing thought when in 1922 I returned from service in the East.

In 1925 I went to Leeds, and shortly afterward had the very great privilege, under the auspices of what was then called "The World Alliance for the Promotion of International Friendship Through the Churches," of traveling to Germany with a number of other ministers, Anglican and Free Church. Our delegation was headed by the then Bishop of Ripon, the greatly beloved Doctor Burroughs, and we visited many towns in north Germany, speaking at innumerable meetings, being entertained often in the homes of German people, all charmingly friendly, and I think we were able to spread good will. I made friendships in Germany then which, I hope, still persist.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Recently I went through some letters which I received from a German Headmaster friend who kindly entertained me in his home during one of my visits to Germany. He wrote on December 9, 1933, in answer to a letter of mine pleading with him to influence the German churches to support our own in a movement I then tried to inaugurate called the "International Christian Movement," putting the claims of Christ before all questions of mere policy:

"It is not necessary to ask the Church to take steps in your

## "WAR IS BEASTLY"

Early in this trip, at Hamburg, I had an extraordinary experience which deeply moved and impressed me. I met a German minister, with whom I exchanged experiences, only to find a most amazing set of coincidences. He and I were exactly the same age. We each had the same number of children. We were both very interested in the study of psychology in its bearing on the pastoral side of the minister's work. But even more wonderful still, we found that he was in charge of Turkish troops in the same war zone in Mesopotamia as that in which I was in charge of Indian troops, and at the same time. If we had got near each other then we should have done everything possible to kill one another, yet we had the most important things in life in common. Our difference was that his country had done something of which my country did not approve and the attempt to settle things around the conference table had failed. The accident of birth separated us. The love of Christ and desire to serve Him made us one.

With what a deep hatred one loathes war when it tells one to seek to kill such a man as Martin Gerhardt or such a man as Niemöller; when it turns into enemies the charming boys and girls one met in Germany, in Hamburg and Wurtemberg and Berlin and Eisenach and Kassel. Because Hitler will not agree with Chamberlain or keep his pledged word, I am invited

---

direction, since the responsible men at the top of the nation who have all the power in their hands are undoubtedly prompted by a desire to attain the very same ends. . . . Hitler has repeatedly emphasized that after the return of the Saar territory to Germany there will be no points of dissension left between the two countries. A new war would mean the useless butchering of thousands of splendid young men. . . . I hope [Hitler's] utterances were published to the full in your papers. Their wording had a ring of absolute sincerity whose power no German reader, or hearer could resist."

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

to kill a German minister, with whom I have more important ideals in common than I have with some military-minded leaders in my own country. Is such a killing a real contribution to the peace of the world?

My thoughts along these lines led me very nearly to become a pacifist. I have a very great affection for pacifists. Many are my dearest friends. Who can imagine Jesus firing a rifle, or driving a bayonet into another, or dropping a bomb even on a battalion, let alone a town? And doesn't that settle the whole matter?

How can anything be right for a Christian about which he cannot pray? We can pray in general terms, but who could offer such a prayer as this?—

"O God, help me to shoot straight, to kill or maim my brother German. Help me to hold my bayonet steady when I drive it in, and twist it round and tug it out in the way I have been shown. Help me to drop my bombs accurately and kill as many as possible of my brothers for whom Christ died. In the name of Christ the loving and merciful Saviour, I make my prayer. Amen."

To me that seems blasphemy.

War costs lives, the lives of the fittest and best, the leaders of the new age. It breaks the law of God against killing. It costs money which is largely wasted while valuable enterprises which would benefit the whole world are held up for lack of funds. War releases lust and passion of the most degrading kind. War excites a propaganda of lies—(In the last war a newspaper correspondent reported the story of a little Belgian girl who had unnameable atrocities done to her. Subsequently the journalist admitted that he had made

## "WAR IS BEASTLY"

the story up!) By such means we are made to hate our enemies.

I was reminiscing lately with a friend who was with me in the Great War. He was a chaplain. I asked him his outstanding impression in a sentence or two. He bit on his pipe. Then came something like this (we were both in the East): "Terrible marches over endless deserts or through foul marshes. Men going down like flies from fever and malaria. A battalion near us was ordered to camp on the — marshes. They lost eighty per cent of their men before any battle was fought by them. For the rest, my impression is: Waiting in suspense and in horrible discomfort. Then a rush and a battle. Burying my men. Trying to find the heads that belonged to bodies, and legs and arms that belonged to each other and writing home to mothers to tell them their sons died like gallant gentlemen, when they'd been blown to bits, some of them, by guns they'd never seen. . . . Writing all night as I sat by the wounded, moaning in dimly lit tents, waiting, praying for the end, biting their fingers to keep from screaming. Then back in rest camps picking the fleas off myself and hunting for vermin in my blankets and talking to the men about a God of love."—Yes, that is a pretty accurate description of war.

Surely, then, the matter for the Christian is settled. He can take no part or lot in any war. For how can he reconcile it with the spirit of Jesus Christ, and if he cannot, is there any point in going farther?

I felt that pacifism must be my position. I preached often between 1922 and 1936 on the evil of war. I advocated disarmament. I remember addressing a great meeting in the Albert Hall, London, at which both Archbishops spoke, and offending both of them by what I said in an appeal to youth not to let the

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

horror of war overtake us again. I did not realize how little this matter is in the hands of youth until some are needed who will do the fighting and the willing to lay down their lives. I prayed earnestly for guidance. I thought and rethought my position. Finally I wrote to the Peace Pledge Union for their literature. I signed the card vowing never to sanction war again. I thought I was a convinced pacifist.

Then one night Dick Sheppard came to spend the night with me in Leeds. We sat up to the early hours. Most people who entertained Dick did that! When he had gone, I knew that I was turning to pacifism simply because I was too tired to think any more. "War is beastly. Have nothing to do with it!" It was a simple formula and it seemed sound. But the more I thought, the more I felt that it was not going to be nearly so easy as that. My pacifism would have been a refusal to think. I am not insulting others by saying that theirs is. I am merely saying that mine would have been. I tore up my "Peace-Pledge" avowal. I began to think again.

## CHAPTER II

### "SO WHY NOT PACIFISM?"

ONE of the dangers of coming into touch with Dick Sheppard was that he was so utterly charming and lovable that one found it almost impossible to disagree with him. Yet as we talked through that night, I well remember his saying: "Leslie, I know I'm inconsistent. If any one attacked my wife, I should 'sock him in the jaw.' "

But that was far from being the only inconsistency we discovered. I must not continue now to say "we," for Dick has passed on, to the great loss of all who knew and loved him.

I cannot exclude from my process of thinking things out the fact that law always needs—in the present stage of our development—the appeal to force as its final appeal, and that to remove that force altogether is often to say good-by to law and order and all the ideals which they allow us to realize, and to hand things over to that element in society of which its criminal classes are made.

Even in the best-regulated school the final appeal is to force, either of punishment or ejection. In the city we sleep safely in our beds at night and go about our lawful occasions in freedom and happiness because we are guarded. Moreover, we are guarded with a force which would be exercised even to the taking of life if that became necessary. If the police could not cope with the situation, the military would be called out. If the military could not cope with the situation without taking life, then, as my years in India proved through many unhappy examples, they would take

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

life. I am thus accepting freedom for which life might have to be laid down. I am consenting to a security achieved through force, a force which might cost life.

Indeed, as I view the matter, it would be definitely retrogressive *at this stage* to abandon that final appeal to force. In some places life would at once be handed over to the criminal classes. Dismiss the London police force, and in a few months the city would not, I think, be a very desirable place in which to live. The thieves and rogues and gangsters and brothel-keepers would approve the step, but it would not win general support! Many pacifists would go so far with me.

Let me see if I can take them with me a step farther. In my training for the Indian Army as a young sub-altern, I saw a little of military life in the northwest corner of India, and tried to understand the situation there.

Our Northwest Frontier force guards the difficult and dangerous boundary between Afghanistan, Waziristan, and the Punjab. Take away that force—as the consistent pacifist would have to do if he had the power—and in a few days, or even hours, the warlike Waziris and Afghans would be over the frontier, slaying, robbing and raping the Hindus *whom we have promised to guard*.

When I have put this point to pacifists they have said, "Oh, well, we ought to inquire into the wrongs of the hill-tribes, and ask *why* they raid and loot and burn and murder and rape, and we ought to send among them more men like Pennell, the fine missionary doctor whom Lord Roberts said was worth a battalion of soldiers."<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Lord Roberts' words about Pennell are well worth quoting more fully. "He was quite fearless. He never carried a weapon

## "SO WHY NOT PACIFISM?"

I most enthusiastically agree, but—and I keep on saying this to my pacifist friends—WHAT IN THE MEANTIME?

It may be argued that we ought not to be in India at all. But we *are* there, and we have made certain contracts with Indian inhabitants, promising them freedom and safety. Are we then, one evening, to say to them, "We have now become pacifists. We are withdrawing the Northwest Frontier force and sending it home to England"? Would that be an honorable, would it be a Christian thing to do? It is wrong to take the life of a Waziri. I am against the policy of bombing their villages from the air. But I think it would be a far greater wrong to leave people unguarded whom we have promised to guard and to make them suffer for our so-called principles *which they do not share.*

By all means let every effort, and far greater efforts, be made in the direction of conciliation and understanding to the aggressive, but not in the direction of going back on our word to those to whom we are committed; not, in the pursuit of the ideal of nonresistance which holds for the individual, surrendering an equally important ideal where others are concerned who are committed to us, namely, the ideal of law and order and justice and security. When understanding and friendship are *established*, the presence of force lessens the sense of security. On the frontier between the U. S. A. and Canada, the sudden display of force would lessen security, but we have not yet reached that

---

of any kind. He was patient and determined. His aim was to get to understand the people and to be trusted by them; and in this endeavor, living among them and mixing freely and fearlessly with them, and by the example of his frugal, self-denying life, he achieved a remarkable measure of success." (*Life of Pennell*, by N. J. Davidson.) Seeley Service & Co., Ltd.

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

stage on the Northwest Frontier. The military force there seeks not a yard of land, not a single selfish gain. Where lives are taken it is only that more lives may be spared. Wrong is done that a greater wrong may be prevented.

Let me turn to another true incident. The *Daily Telegraph* of Saturday, February 2, 1935, contains a report of, and a leading article about, the capture, by pirates, of some British and American children in the China Sea. They were on board the steamer *Tungchow* on their way from Shanghai to school at Crefoo.

I will imagine that I am in charge of the children on such a vessel in such circumstances. If the pirates would not listen to reason, would not discuss the matter, would not do anything less than take the children off to their lair in the hills for their own purposes, would it be wrong to wireless for a destroyer or for aeroplanes?

I hold that it would not. It is wrong to fight, even to fight pirates, but if your daughter of eighteen had been on board, wouldn't you feel it was a better thing for them to be beaten off, even if some were killed, than your daughter should be the prostitute of Chinese pirates in some remote mountain fastness for perhaps a dozen years?

In the actual case I quote, the children were rescued by planes from the British aircraft-carrier *Hermes*, supported by the British destroyer *Dainty*. I think they carried out the will of God in those circumstances and that Jesus Christ would have approved their action. Yet they killed, and broke the commandments, and we still cannot imagine Jesus working a gun on the destroyer.

This question of "What would Jesus do?" is so

## "SO WHY NOT PACIFISM?"

acute that I should like to quote some words of Dr. F. E. England on the subject:

"One must not minimize the difficulty of relating Jesus to the concrete situations with which we find ourselves confronted today. Some Christian people try to live by the rule, 'What would Jesus do?' They determine their attitude toward such matters as capital punishment and the use of force by asking themselves whether Jesus would do this or that. Doubtless this method is of the highest value in certain kinds of situation. It helps us to avoid the angry retort, the selfish act, the ungenerous thought; it puts us on the highway of duty and it sweetens life with the fragrance of mercy and sympathy. Yet it must be remembered that the rule of doing what Jesus would do is not the charter which He Himself provided for the conduct of our lives. We are in no way commensurate with Him, neither is our vocation identical with His. There is something almost approaching blasphemy in the assertion that Calvary is the basic pattern of the Christian life. That sublime offering could be made only by one such as the Son of God. There is and can be only one world Redeemer, and He never asked His disciples to join Him on the other crosses. He asked them to take up very different crosses of their own, and they were crosses of self-denying service. We are not called to be Christs, or to imitate His ministry, but, rather, to do all in our power to extend His kingdom in the world. Christ won His kingship of the human race by His victory over sin and death. But although His kingship is eternally and finally established, His kingdom is not yet won. And it will be won only as His followers are prepared to

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

wage perpetual warfare against everything that obstructs that kingdom. It cannot be denied that the sublimest weapons the Christian warrior can wield are love, good will, meekness, charitableness, and conciliation. But there are strongholds of evil against which these weapons prove ineffective, and it is our conviction that at a time when strident godlessness, truculent cruelty, and brutal aggressiveness threaten the very existence of the kingdom of spiritual liberty, of righteousness, and peace, we have no option but to put the weight of our Christian influence behind the determination to resist the spread of an evil contagion.

"If this resistance cannot be accomplished except by the deplorable method of war, we must reflect that the alternative is the betrayal of the sacred cause which our Lord and Master laid down His life to inaugurate and which He has entrusted to His Church for all time. That is the grim dilemma with which the Christian conscience is confronted today. We dare not compromise with evil, nor can we calmly contemplate the existence of a Europe in which the very ground principles of morality and religion are flouted."<sup>2</sup>

I would not myself use the word "betrayal" in the last paragraph, for I admire deeply the spirit and courage of many pacifists and feel that their witness is a most useful factor in the life of a community in which costly idealism is rare enough. But I think that they are mistaken, that they have a splendid heart, but that they have not quite thought the matter through.

I wonder, if Jesus had turned up while the robbers

---

<sup>2</sup> *The Christian World*, October 19, 1939.

## "SO WHY NOT PACIFISM?"

were still attacking the man on the Jericho road, whether He would have passed by, or even stood by. I wonder, if the Temple police had sought to clear the Temple for Him as they ought to have done, whether He would have interfered. I wonder whether He would have spoken as He did to soldiers,<sup>8</sup> if He felt that their work was *in all circumstances* immoral. For instance, would He have said to brothel-keepers without a word of condemnation, "Be content with your wages"? (Compare Luke 3. 14.)

The question of war between nations does not arise in the New Testament. The historical circumstances show a dominating Rome unthreatened by any other power, but obedience to authority seems enjoined. We are to render to Caesar the moneys that are Caesar's. And part of Caesar's task is to protect those committed to him. Love and forgiveness and the Christian attitude toward "enemies" generally never mean that the offender is to go his way unchecked and displace law and good government by piracy. To allow this would ultimately prove a disservice to the pirates. Force cannot make a bad man good, but it can, and I think ought to, limit the scope and extent of the evil he plans. Force is never the highest form of treatment for any offender, but we have to decide not what were ideal but what can be done to stay evil in the circumstances presented.

Where the issue is an individual one, or where no one but the pacifist and those who think with him are concerned, then pacifism is at any rate justifiable. But I do not follow the cogency of the argument that declares that it is right for me to accept the freedom and liberty and security, and, indeed, bread, for which

<sup>8</sup> Luke 3. 14; Matthew 8. 5; Acts 10.

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

others are fighting, while, in the meantime, I, accepting the things for which they die, maintain the view that they are wrong, and spread a doctrine which, if followed, would extend the kingdom of lawlessness and bring sorrow and pain and death to thousands who do not share the view proclaimed, a view not held anywhere by a majority. In much the same way I hold that the Christian Scientist parent has no right to press that cult upon his family, the members of which frequently suffer torments through it and sometimes die through the lack of simple medical attention, when they themselves do not share the views which are responsible.

Some weeks ago I had the honor of being invited to lunch by the Chancellor of the Exchequer to meet the Prime Minister. Sitting next our host the conversation turned on Compulsory Military Training, and I expressed certain criticisms in my own mind of the Compulsory Military Training Act. Our conversation was interrupted, but was carried on later by correspondence. Some sentences from a letter I received from Sir John Simon are relevant here:

"I do not think that a man's sense of duty should allow him to accept the protection of others who may be going to risk their lives and suffer fearful injuries in the effort to protect him. So while I am all for respecting conscientious scruples in whatever direction they tend, I do not really think that the conscientious objector is the only person with a sensitive conscience—indeed, much as I respect any honest point of view, I think this point of view is not well founded in reason. Goodness has to be reverenced in whatever form it appears, but goodness is not the same thing as weak reasoning, and I

## "SO WHY NOT PACIFISM?"

believe that brains are an essential part of the outfit of a whole man, and to me, the argument against the intellectual position of the conscientious objector is a strong one."<sup>4</sup>

Coming to the present issue, it seems to me that Britain and France are trying to act as Europe's policemen. One wishes that an international police force made up of disinterested personnel had been feasible. With the failure of the League of Nations, that hope has gone for the time being, though if the scheme for federal union receives the support one hopes, then the idea will again find expression. But federal union, pacifists should observe, will, in certain instances, depend for its success on force. The fact that Britain and France are concerned for their own interests is one which militates against any pure conception of a police function, but we will examine that point later.

Having exhausted all attempts at conciliation, forceful action is at last taken by the nation as a whole. I know that for the Christian, if the State calls him to do a thing which is contrary to Christ, he must put Christ first. "My country, right or wrong" is not a doctrine to be held tenaciously. But if a case can be made out that British and French action in this emergency is comparable with putting down piracy, the Christian ought to examine the matter very closely.

For not lightly can the individual cut himself free from the State while remaining within her borders and claiming the inherent advantages.

If in our home town a madman did a millionth part of the harm Hitler has done in Europe, we should feel that the police ought to restrain him. When the

---

<sup>4</sup>Letter from 11 Downing Street, dated June 6, 1939.

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

State, acting as an international policeman, seeks to restrain an international madman by the only means in her power—having tried all others—and if the State, in capacity of policemen, has pledged her word to stand by some stricken victim of the madman's insensate fury (for that was the position in regard to Poland), can we really so dissociate ourselves from the State as to stand apart, save to condemn, while we enjoy the freedom from the madman's activities which the State thus secures for us? Is not our condemnation the condemnation of our country for keeping its pledged word to another in the only way which that country would recognize?

Those who argued for disarmament used to say that no great nation would ever strike at a country incapable of making resistance. On November 9, 1934, the Bishop of Birmingham, Doctor Barnes, said, "Disarmament is a great risk, but it is worth taking, for no great nation would so shock the conscience of the world as to use aeroplanes against a country that had rendered itself incapable of retaliation." But what of Mussolini in Abyssinia and Hitler in Poland? Dictators are no more afraid of shocking the conscience of the world than burglars are afraid of shocking the conscience of a city. Dr. Cyril Emmet writes:

"In spite of Tolstoy, it is hard to believe that Christ meant to forbid His followers ever to use force to protect others. While it is possible that a bachelor may properly feel called upon to give away all that he has, it is very doubtful whether it is right for one who has a wife, children, and employees dependent on him; and it is perfectly certain that it is wrong for those who are trustees of other people's property. Now, the State is always a trustee

## "SO WHY NOT PACIFISM?"

for others, both for its actual members and for future generations. The responsible rulers of a State must always be faced with the difficulty that though they themselves might be willing to suffer any conceivable loss of influence, territory, or material prosperity, or even death itself, rather than go to war, they have no right to enforce these sacrifices on others who may be quite unwilling to make the surrender."<sup>5</sup>

I can see how convincing the pacifist argument can be to the pacifist. "Let the State go to war," he argues. "I put Christ before the State. I believe that war is contrary to the spirit of Christ. Therefore I will have nothing to do with it." But he can only stand aside at the cost of his duties as a citizen and at the risk of involving his fellow citizens in enormous suffering to pay for his views, which they do not share. Every male pacifist standing aside increases the chance of defeat. To be logical, he either desires this defeat, or else is willing to gain by the "sin of war" of which he speaks much and which his country is waging to protect him, among others, from the horrors of the Hitler regime. He must ask himself whether that regime would mean for women and children—not only himself—a greater or less evil than they suffer through war. Is the pacifist prepared to see the price paid for nonresistance, not by himself (for I know he is sincere enough to face this), but by thousands of women and children? If he has read the Government white paper on the atrocities in concentration camps, the floggings and shootings and hangings, then surely, for others' sake, he will think his way through a little farther. To my mind, the aggressive thrusting of pacifist principles on pagan

<sup>5</sup> *The Faith and the War*, p. 204, The Macmillan Company.

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

States would defeat the adoption of those principles by those States. The pacifist contention thus defeats its own object. Brothers who feel brotherly will not fight. Let us work to make the nations brotherly, not to say to them that they are wicked not to respond in a brotherly way to aggressive action which has no brotherliness in it, but is pure piracy. My own view amounts to this, that unless we use force, we end, perhaps for a century, the chance of a speedy pacifism between the nations.

So we must pass to the next stage of the argument, and ask whether war can be the exercise of a police function?

## CHAPTER III

### "BUT WHAT WILL KILLING ACCOMPLISH?"

I REMEMBER that when Doctor Orchard, then minister of the King's Weigh House Church in London, was asked what he would do if someone raped his sister or assaulted his mother, he said that at any rate he would not go to France and kill the assailant's brother.

The argument was used widely in the last war. What would you do if someone attacked your loved ones? Yet what an irrelevant question it is! As we saw in the first chapter, if one goes to the war, one kills, or is killed by, a man who is perhaps a German church-school teacher or, it may be, a fellow Christian, from whom the truth as we see it has been excluded and who believes he is dying for his fatherland or killing an enemy he has been taught to hate, an enemy who is supposed to desire to crush his country, or encircle it, or starve his women and children.

To call war the exercise of a police function is surely absurd, when at the end of it, with tens of thousands killed, the person—in this case Hitler—or persons, against whom the police activity was directed, remains untouched.

And to wage war against men with whom we have no personal grievance is surely as far from police activity as it could be.

On Christmas Day in 1914, German and British soldiers fraternized in the No Man's Land between the trenches. They exchanged chocolates and cigarettes. They made friends. *They* had no quarrel. Why should they kill one another?—especially on this night of nights? But they were driven back to their

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

trenches by order of the high command. You can't run a war on those lines. It would never do. They must throw bombs, not chocolates. They must be given garbled stories of Belgian atrocities to make them hate one another.

When I made reference to this incident in a broadcast talk, an ex-soldier picked it up in Saskatchewan and wrote as follows, proving that the incident, unlike the progress of Russian soldiers through England, did happen:

"You mentioned the fraternizing between the lines —at Christmas, 1914 . . . the writer was one who engaged in that happy incident. . . . Possibly you have thought like myself: what would have happened, if Tommy and Hun alike, decided to pack up and return to our distant hearths at home? Of course we were young and full of patriotism in those days, and it seems that with most of us . . . we have to grow a few gray hairs before we are able to see the world in its true perspective. Were we ever in a greater mess than we are today?"

One wishes with all one's heart that the men who are called on to do the fighting could do the discussing. If they can be brought near enough to one another to bayonet one another, why can't they be brought near enough to one another to discuss the whole issue through selected representatives? They have so much in common.

Think of art, literature, music, scientific research, philosophic inquiry, the art of healing, the love of nature, the longing for happiness, the simple desire to live and let live, to contribute through one's chosen profession to the life of the world, to marry and have

## "BUT WHAT WILL KILLING ACCOMPLISH?"

jolly children, to enjoy the good things God meant *all* His children to have, to grow old beautifully and slip into another world, as a tired child slips into the land of dreams at nightfall. Why on earth should men kill one another? Take the act of killing out of its context, and how irrelevant and futile it all seems!

It is a thousand pities that there cannot be contact between the young men about to die. I feel that they would find a way without destroying one another even when the statesmen had failed.

I honor the statesmen. I know they do their utmost. I cannot think of one stone which Mr. Chamberlain left unturned in his search for peace with justice in 1938 and 1939. But the fact is that although there is enough good will in the world to prevent war, it cannot freely flow from one country to the other. The only channels are diplomatic channels, and they are far too narrow and shallow to carry the floods of good will which exist. Once war breaks out, communications are shut down still more. Both sides deal in lies, shout at each other in wireless speeches which are ridiculed and made ridiculous. Facts are distorted and lies told until the German also frankly believes he is fighting in a holy crusade and Von Ribbentrop at Danzig assures him that his cause is just and that God will defend the right.

This summer (1939) over a hundred young people from my church went over to Germany on a "good-will invasion" which I organized. They made friendly contacts and received nothing but good will. In Dusseldorf they placed a wreath on the War Memorial and attached to it a prayer that never again might their two countries so misunderstand one another as to go to war. Some young Germans read the prayer as the

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

party were leaving the memorial, ran after them and said, "That is our prayer too."

If only youth could meet in conference even now, I am certain a way through could be found. But look what happens. There is a quarrel on the other side of Europe. A certain dictator makes known his intention to invade a certain territory. International complications would certainly develop through treaties and pacts; through A offering assistance to B if this or that happens. Negotiation is attempted, and, in the first crisis, to the great credit of Mr. Chamberlain, and to our too-complacent relief, it came off, through a small State being made to pay a bitter price for our peace, or, rather, for our immediate escape from war.

But the second time, through the refusal of Hitler to listen to repeated appeals for a conference, it didn't come off, and what happens?

A bitter letter from one who served in the last war and is likely to lose his boys in this one expresses the thoughts of many hearts:

"Unfortunately we are governed in the main by old men. But the old men never fight. They only land us in diplomatic *impasses* and then tell us that the only honorable thing to do is to fight. By that they mean that they will send, in expression of *their* policy, tens of thousands of fine young men full of ideals, full of desires to build a nobler, cleaner, more brotherly world, to kill, maim, and wound tens of thousands of other young men of another nation, who also want to build a new, nobler, cleaner world, but who are as much in the hands of their old men as we are.

"Desperate desires for peace continually express themselves in this plan and in that, in this confer-

## "BUT WHAT WILL KILLING ACCOMPLISH?"

ence and in that, in this suggestion and that. The old men direct the conferences. Not one of them has succeeded yet. As for the suggestions and plans of youth, they laugh at them, sneer them out of existence, deride them and call those who make them fools. When the old men, having derided youth's ideals and made them look stupid, try their own wiser, practical methods, we find sixteen million people are dead, counting civilians—and presumably they do count—twenty million wounded, three million prisoners, nine million orphans, five million war widows and ten million refugees. Then the old men draw up a so-called Peace Treaty full of venom and hate, so that in twenty years the 'conquered' nation, determined not to be humiliated forever, is the greatest military force in the world and the most feared nation in Europe. The hate of the diplomats undoes the work our boys have given their lives for.

"But whatever the old men do or do not do, youth still has the last word, and therefore the final responsibility. Here is the significant thing: *The old men never fight.* As Mr. A. A. Milne truly says, 'If on the morning war broke out, the Prime Ministers of all the countries concerned were hanged, there would never be another war.' You laugh, for it sounds absurd. But it is far less absurd than that two or three million young men who have no quarrel of any kind with anyone should be blown to pieces.

"I wish you would warn youth of what the old men will do first.

"1. First they will do all in their power to make you believe that Britain is completely right and 'the enemy' is completely wrong. During the Great

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

War newspaper leading articles, news itself, cartoons, posters on the billboards tried to teach us that every German—though hundreds were fellow Christians with whom we had everything sacred in common—were intoxicated with the mad dream of the Kaiser and fit only to be shot. Many newspapers did a brisk trade in lurid lies and in stories of atrocities that never happened in order to make the British people hate Germany.

"2. Secondly, they will try and make every young man feel it is his duty as a man and a patriot to defend women and children and die for his native land. They won't tell you that in the next war you won't be able to defend women and children because while you are away fighting, aeroplanes can drop germs and poison gas over whole cities. They won't tell you, either, that some of the finest of our women are unwilling to be defended by a method which means the murder of men, women, and children in another land. How can I *defend* my wife by joining the air force and dropping bombs on Berlin? The best women I know don't want to be defended, if being defended means dropping bombs on other women.

"3. Thirdly, the old men know that they can count on a psychological condition which exists in the mind of every man in the world. The very instinctive impulses we have taken over from our animal ancestors mean that there are channels, very deep ones too, carved in the mind by the repeated reactions of centuries. For centuries men have defended mate and young by force, have committed acts of revenge and retaliation, have killed and been killed.

"As soon as the bugles blow and bands play and

## "BUT WHAT WILL KILLING ACCOMPLISH?"

posters proclaim, 'Your king and country need you,' 'Fight for women and children' and so on, then down the ancient channels rush the energies of the mind as soon as the stimulus releases them. Then in vain is peace talk, or reason, or appeal to Christ. Indeed, no doubt again, distinguished ecclesiastics would find a way of proving to us that 'under the circumstances,' or in view of this fact or that, or because we are 'committed by treaties' which the man who fights hardly knew existed, and the implications of which he certainly did not understand, the only thing to do was to leave all the peaceful pursuits of youth, throw away all thought of career, of university distinction or professional service to the community or the honorable business of commerce, and, wearing a military uniform, set off to shoot, bayonet, bomb or gas a young man of another country who has exactly the same ideals."

These are bitter words, and we cannot admit the sneer at the "old men" who have done their best in the conditions imposed upon them.

The question is whether the prosecution of war by young men against other young men with whom they have so much in common can ever be regarded as police work. There is no doubt in my own mind that the early Christian Church acquiesced in *police* work. They were guarded by the force behind the Roman law, and, of the civil magistrate, Saint Paul wrote, "He beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil."<sup>1</sup> "In our words," adds a commentator, "the collective will of Christian citizens demands that their representatives should punish or prevent

---

<sup>1</sup> Romans 13. 4.

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

outrage at large, just as they themselves would in individual cases."

Let us see what the police function involves:

1. Police activity is aimed only at the aggressor, or the wrongdoer. It doesn't, for example—to go back to our illustration of Chinese pirates—hang the pirates' wives or bomb their children.

2. Police activity is not aimed at killing, but at making the offender a good citizen, if this can be done without endangering the lives of innocent victims.

3. Police activity summons the offender to an impartial court, and punishment is inflicted by disinterested people.

4. Police activity is capable of successfully achieving its objects.

Now, does war fulfill these four functions? It certainly does not. Go back to them as stated above:

1. War, as we have seen, means suffering for thousands of people who have committed no crime, unless it be counted a crime to support a Government which acts criminally. But, remember, the supporters are carefully taught that whoever is wrong, their Government is not; so is their support a crime, if facts which would aid them in coming to a right judgment are excluded from them?

2. Police activity aims at making the offender a good citizen, but the aim of war is to kill as many of the offenders as possible, and the ways of doing so have become increasingly barbarous as "civilization" has progressed.

3. Police activity summons the offender to an impartial court, but war turns the policeman into judge, jury, warder and executioner in one, and when war is called off, peace too often is dictated. It is in the nature of a further sentence.

## "BUT WHAT WILL KILLING ACCOMPLISH?"

4. Police activity is capable of successfully achieving its objects. So, I think, is war, up to a point; but without doubt some wars have released more evil into the world than the evil they set out to restrain or end. If a war be won, then too frequently the flush of triumph and the cost of obtaining it work together to make the victor unfair and unjust in his demands. But if a war be lost, the police intention fails.

It was this consideration, I presume, which made the Dean of Saint Paul's write as follows:

"Speaking generally, it seems to be not only imprudent but ethically wrong to fight unless there is a reasonable prospect of winning. The only respectable motive for war is to prevent the triumph of injustice. To secure this we accept war as being the lesser of two very great evils. But if there is no reasonable prospect of victory, we have embarked upon a course which will bring two evils into the world instead of one."<sup>2</sup>

These words are important, but I should want to make reservations, for to many it were better to die in a cause of freedom than to submit to injustice because one could not win.

Let us, in discussing the police function in war, not forget one fact. When I was in Belgium in 1934 and watched the children playing so happily and the life of the nation being lived in conditions of freedom, I could not help remembering that but for the *victory* of the Allies in 1914-1918, Belgium would have been governed either by the Kaiser and soaked with the doctrines of the Prussians or by Hitler and soaked with the doctrines of the Nazis. It is terrible to think of

---

<sup>2</sup> *The Spectator*, February 17, 1939.

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

those children brought up in the Nazi regime with the accompanying terrors of the secret police, the concentration camps, the persecutions and tyrannies which would have cast their blight over that free and pleasant land. Was it worth it? Does such a result justify us in calling war a police activity?

So our argument has developed to this point. War is beastly. We see that clearly. We need not go over it again. It cannot be in harmony with the ideal intention of God. But is pacifism satisfactory? Can we contract out of the community which has given us so much? Can we be a party to the breaking of the solemn pledge given to a smaller country? Can we view the spread of a doctrine of evil without taking action internationally when we should speedily take action in the smaller community of the town or city? We *have* taken such action in Palestine, or not a single Jewish life would have been safe.

Let it be granted that there is not a real parallel between the police force of a town and the large-scale massacre of modern war, yet I think that the State in its present development must use force to protect its nationals from the kind of evil which the Nazi regime has disseminated in every country which it has "annexed" or conquered. We cannot follow the ethic which bids us "turn the other cheek" when the cheek we should offer to the smiter would not be our own but that of the next generation and that of the women and children and old folk of our own. Such an ethic outrages our deepest feelings. In the present emergency war is the nearest approximation we can make to police action and the only way available to us to hinder the spreading of international crime.

Jesus, it is granted, said no word about war between nations, for, as we have seen, the occasion never arose.

## **"BUT WHAT WILL KILLING ACCOMPLISH?"**

Rome was everywhere supreme. Yet His emphasis on doing good, His interest in the widow and orphan, were so great even when He was discussing minor distress such as the clothing of the naked and the feeding of the hungry, that I think He would approve of activity calculated to save the aged and defenseless. And if war be, at our present stage, the only way we have of delivering our people from outrages, would Christ not bid us make resistance? Surely to stand by and do nothing and increase the scope of such evil would win His condemnation. The last judgment on those who were sent to punishment for not clothing the naked would seem farcical if the Judge allowed no restraint of such activity as we have indicated. Our present task is in no sense vengeance for the Poles but the prevention of further crime in yet other countries.

## CHAPTER IV

### "SO WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN TO DO?"

It is hateful to have to face the fact, but the Christian Englishman at the present time, whether he decides for pacifism or national service, must do *some* wrong in order to do that which he believes to be right.

If he decides on pacifism and remains in England, then he must accept the protection for which others are dying, he must refuse to support the State from which come most of the amenities of his life, he must support the breaking of pledges given by his nation, he must encourage the spread of the evil against which his nation makes her protest in war, and he must encourage a policy which, if widely adopted, would lead to the finest things in his own culture being taken from him and, what matters more, from others. He must invite suffering, not on himself—which does not matter—but on others who do not share his view, and *that* is a form of compulsion which one ought not to bring upon another.

Frequently he appears to be the idealist, but it must not be forgotten that in quest of the undoubtedly valuable ideal of nonresistance, he must let go the ideal of freedom and that of justice, and especially that of pacifism. It was Pascal who wrote:

"Justice without force is without power. Force without justice is tyranny. We must therefore put together justice and force so that whatever is just is mighty and whatever is mighty is just."

I cannot have all the ideals I want to see set up. My ideal for the murderers and Jew-haters of England is

## "SO WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN TO DO?"

not that they should all be encouraged to kill and persecute, for I have an ideal for their victims also. Why should I consent to restrain English criminals and offer no resistance to those from abroad who follow a criminal policy?

But, on the other hand, if a man decides to enlist, he cannot achieve his goal of right without committing a wrong. It is wrong to kill, and especially to kill the innocent.

War is obviously wrong. We will wage it as cleanly as we can. We will pray that British hands may be kept clean of the use of poison gas (even though our enemies use it), and clean of attacks on unfortified towns. Let us drop leaflets when we might have dropped bombs, and take the steps that are suggested in the last chapter.

Yet, as we have seen, war means destruction of countless lives for which Christ died: the lives of folk with whom we have everything in common save acquiescence in a tyrannous form of government, which they are too afraid or too blind to overthrow. War means fear and terror sown in the hearts of women and little children, breeding nervous troubles in the later years. War means that lies are spread abroad as "propaganda." War means the spread of hate and lust. It means waste of energy, waste of life, waste of money and a thousand other evils. Without doubt war is always wrong. There is not even any certainty that it will do what we allege, and end the Nazi regime. For we thought we had ended Prussianism that way. The last war was "the war to end war." But, behold, only one head of the hydra was cut off. Another now rears its ghastly form.

So what is the Christian to do?

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

Let me first of all say that whichever the Christian decides to do, he will have my respect and affection. No problem of conduct ever set before the mind bristles with such difficulties as this. What is more, I am sure that Jesus Christ would not condemn any man who tried to think the matter out and do His will. Courage and determination are required and are shown on both sides. The only thing we must not do is to assume that, whatever our point of view, we are right and the other fellow is wrong. For it is not true to think that concerning either side all the wrong is on one side and all the right on the other.

This issue which confronts the Christian is not a choice between right and wrong, but between two courses both of which, as we have seen above, are wrong. You are not deciding between black and white, but between two grays. It is impossible to reconcile war with Christianity. It is impossible to reconcile with Christianity the only other course the Government left open to us. It is impossible to act as though one were not a member of the State. God will honor our choice which ever it is. I have never taken the completely pacifist view, and cannot now. But again and again I have the uneasy feeling that the pacifist may be far more right than I am.

At any rate, we must not pretend that this is a righteous war. Its *aim* is righteous, not its method, and we must say that, even if we admit that it is the only method open to us to secure our aim.

The only mild comfort we may administer to ourselves is that we have done the best we could under the grim and evil circumstances of the sinful nature of men and the sin of all nations—and there is comfort in the truth that evil and guilt are not necessarily the same thing. If a man is confronted by two evils,

## "SO WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN TO DO?"

one of which he *must* do, he will not be held guilty of personal sin in doing the lesser.

What, then, can we hope?

(1) We can hope that this terrible conflict will limit the area of infection of this evil disease of Nazism, so that other countries, like Holland and Switzerland and Belgium and Greece, will not live in constant fear, as we have been doing, to the great straining of all our nerves, from crisis to crisis.

We can honestly say that we have taken over the fears which fill other hearts, and I am sure that there is relief in many hearts in neutral countries because we have gathered their fears to our own breasts that they may dwell in safety. I think, if I were the father of a Swiss family, I should be glad today that England and France, the world's policemen, were seeking to arrest the cruel bully who might turn on my country next, end its independence, and train its children in the doctrines of godless tyranny.

(2) We can hope for a speedy conclusion. Don't let us settle down with a pessimistic despair to the thought of a prolonged struggle. Germany may herself repudiate her present rulers. In the providence of God a score of things may happen, and I would suggest that we do not emphasize in our thoughts and prayers the victory of arms, but the speedy cessation of conflict, and that God will show us yet a way of establishing righteousness and justice without further bloodshed.

(3) We hope in God. He is not beaten. He has not given us up, nor has He given up the Germans. He does not look down on this world as hopeless, and therefore those who believe in God may not despair. God is suffering in all this more than we can dream. Yet He believes in His children.

(4) We can hope that, in a new world which will

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

be reborn at last, allegiance to a country will conflict less with allegiance to Christ. We must work for that.

(5) We can hope that the ideal of freedom, of the moral necessity that the strong help the weak, may be, by suffering, so stamped on the minds of men that even if the historian a thousand years hence wonders at the incredible folly of our time, yet freedom and justice and the rights of small nations may prove to have been preserved as "values"—things of eternal worth—in a way more potent than would have followed subservience to the dictatorship of evil.

But if it be true to say that, whichever way we decide our dilemma, we must do some evil, we must ask the queer question whether it is ever right to do wrong. I think it is, although it sounds like an unworthy piece of plausible sophistry. Indeed, the question must often be faced in a crisis. It is wrong to take a human life. If I took the life of a tiny baby, I should rightly be accused of murder. Yet a physician may crush a baby's head in steel forceps to save the life of a mother. It is right for him to do wrong. We are not asking whether it is wrong to employ wrong means to an end conceived of as right. The answer there, I should suppose, is NO! It is to ask which is the lesser of two evils, one of which one *has* to do, when the goal at which both aim is right.

When the *Lusitania* was sunk, a perilously crowded raft floated away from the wrecked vessel, when a man struggling in the water, who had been rendered insane by his suffering, tried to board it. If he had succeeded, he would have wrecked it and all on board would probably have been drowned. It became the Christian duty of someone on the raft to kick him back into the water, since any attempt to save him in his frantic, struggling state, even if someone gave up his place for the strugger, would have wrecked the raft. To kick a man

## "SO WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN TO DO?"

against whom you have no personal grievance is undoubtedly an evil thing to do. Yet under those circumstances, to my mind, it would have been a more evil thing to do to wreck the raft which contained women and children. It was right to do wrong. The man in the water, himself innocent of evil intention, embodied a danger to a greater number of people, and there was nothing to do but to sacrifice him.

The German soldier must often be innocent of evil intention. It must often be true that his British opposite number has nothing against him, but much in common with him; but the German, as a soldier, embodies a danger to a vastly greater number of people if the cause in which he is an instrument spreads, and the Christian who would prevent that cause spreading must decide whether he must not resist<sup>1</sup> and oppose that cause in the only embodiment of it with which he comes into contact, even though it be the person of a fellow Christian.

Many of us, I suppose, find a compromise in joining a medical or noncombatant unit. This is worthy, of course, but it should be recognized that it is a compromise. Either our country should be defended or it should not. It should be recognized that if *every one* joined a noncombatant unit, it would not be defended.

When I see my little girl playing in the garden, I know that if Nazi aeroplanes came over I should be *glad* if our airmen drove them off, even at the cost of life. I suppose a consistent pacifist would have to steel himself to argue, "They should be allowed to come." I cannot do this. I have weighed the matter up, especially during the last fifteen years, and in this awful dilemma thrust upon us by the sin of the world in

---

<sup>1</sup> I think the Christian soldier must always refuse an order to bomb or gas nonmilitary objectives.

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

which we all share I find that the balances in my mind tip down on the side of armed resistance, as being the only way to resist international crime.

I used to think that it might be better to be invaded than to fight, but a realization of the doctrines which those hold who now threaten us makes me feel that it would be wrong not to resist that for which they stand—and the only way open to me to do that is to resist them.

God knows our own record is not blameless, but I do deprecate a growing habit in some quarters of painting Britain as darkly guilty as Germany. True we sinned deeply at Versailles, and are paying for it. But no nation could have done more to offer conciliation and the way of discussion than Britain has done. In spite of all our sins we do stand for truth as against the lies which can be proved by the simple method of comparing Hitler's promises with his performance ("I have no further territorial ambitions in Europe," he said for the second time at Munich after breaking the first pledge by "annexing" Austria—and then he proceeds to invade Czechoslovakia, Memel, and Poland). We stand for sincerity as against perfidy and treachery. We stand for freedom as against the method of the concentration camp and secret police. We stand for justice as against robbery with violence in high places.

Britain has her faults. She has in the past done many things which stain her record, but in all fairness where is there any comparison in her record, however ancient, with the crimes of modern Germany?

"Where [to quote my friend Professor C. J. Cadoux in a fine recent article] is the British equivalent of that masterful muzzling of the press, whereby the whole German population is prevented from

## "SO WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN TO DO?"

learning any facts of public interest except in that strictly limited measure and in that special version approved by the German Government? What have we in our recent history at all approaching the persecution of the Confessional Church in Germany, involving as it does the arbitrary imprisonment, without trial, of hundreds of Christian ministers, because they will not subscribe to a ridiculously narrow view of the Christian religion? Where in British territory are the concentration camps in which several thousands of persons whose views do not tally with those of the Government are deprived of their liberty, separated from their families, often brutally maltreated, and in any case consigned to the living death of a perpetual, or at least indefinite, imprisonment? What is there in our record that can be put on a par with Germany's treatment of Pastor Niemöller—or with its treatment of thousands of its Jewish subjects, their homes wrecked, their persons assaulted, their families dispersed, their property wantonly confiscated, their means of livelihood removed, their very right to stay in the country canceled? When has Britain flooded the countries near her with swarms of wretched and destitute refugees? What British Government has driven hundreds of its subjects to suicide within the space of a few weeks? What responsible British Minister has ever made a proclamation like that of Goebbels—"Compassion to Jews will not be tolerated"?

"It is beside the point to meet indignant protests against such brutalities with the observation that 'we have no right to condemn a nation because it chooses to be governed in ways that are not our ways.' Not only is it beside the point, but it is not

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

even accurate in point of fact: for a large percentage of the German population (some would say a large majority) do *not choose* to be so governed. But their Government has so perfected its machinery of terrorism and coercion that it can carry on despite the disapproval of vast numbers of the citizens.”<sup>2</sup>

The Dean of Saint Paul’s, writing in *The Spectator* about the way the Christian dilemma arises, uses words which I have permission to quote and which, better than any I can command, sum up this chapter.

“At the outset of its history, the Church had to choose between two possible policies. It was in possession of an absolute ethic, but one which, by reason of the very fact that it was absolute, could not be lived without compromise in the ordinary world of men. Those who had this heritage from the Lord might have cut themselves off from the society of mankind in general and formed an isolated brotherhood. The alternative was to enter the life of the contemporary world and to be citizens of an earthly city as well as of a heavenly one. At no definite date was the choice made, but, in effect, the Church chose to cast in its lot with civilization. There may be difference of opinion whether the choice was right or wrong, but it has been made, and cannot be reversed now. Christianity, for good or evil, has consented to play the game of civilization, and it must play the game out.

“The consequence of this is that the Christian is inevitably under a tension from which there is no escape. He is under the authority of Christ and the new Law of the Kingdom, and he is also under the

---

<sup>2</sup> *The Christian Pacifist*, October, 1939.

## "SO WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN TO DO?"

authority of a community of this world, which is largely based on principles opposed to Christ. He is under an obligation to approximate, as far as possible in the conditions in which he has to live, to the ethical teaching of Jesus and also to do all he can to bring the secular community into closer harmony with the ideals of the Kingdom of God, but he is not, in consequence of this, authorized to repudiate those civil obligations to which he has made himself morally liable by accepting the benefits of secular civilization. There is this unavoidable tension between the values of the Kingdom of God and the values of civilization. How often, when we consider our actions, do we realize that they are, for the most part, the result of a choice between evils—or, what is the same thing, between partial goods! We cannot do what is absolutely good. This predicament becomes tragically plain when the community is at war, for then we are confronted with a choice of two great evils, either to engage in a business which is in contradiction with the mind of Christ or to step out of duties which we have tacitly assumed by living in the community and sharing its life.

"This argument may easily be misunderstood. Saint Augustine and others have hopelessly confused the doctrine of original sin by identifying evil with guilt. In choosing something which is materially evil we may be not only quite innocent but even exhibit heroic virtue, we may be choosing what, in the circumstances, is the only relative good open to us. Thus the man who determines that he will fight for his country in a 'just' war may well believe that he is upheld by the grace of God; but we must say the same of the conscientious objector, if he has

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

weighed the claims upon him and is prepared to face the consequences of his decision."<sup>3</sup>

So the matter must be left as a decision which every man and woman must make for themselves, searching their hearts, shunning all self-deception, all claims to an idealism which is really funk, all ready-made conclusions adopted to save the labor of thinking further, all views accepted merely because some admired friend holds them, or because the majority in one's particular clique have accepted them, or because it is pleasanter or saves trouble to shout with the crowd.

One must come to a conclusion of one's very own, and be able to say with Martin Luther, "Here stand I. I can no other. So help me God."

God will honor such a choice, whichever it is.

---

\* *The Spectator*, February 10, 1939.

## CHAPTER V

### "WHERE DOES THE CHURCH COME IN?"

IT is an interesting, and at first thought a saddening, thing that when a great catastrophe befalls, men turn round on the Church and accuse it of having failed.

We shall presently turn to look at the points at which the Church certainly has failed her Master and the world, and thus done something to make the present calamity possible; but it is important, first of all, to notice that those who most disgustedly make this charge are not the keen Christian people of the community, but those on the outskirts, and many, indeed, quite outside the Church's ministrations.

And their charge is, in a true sense, a compliment. "The Church couldn't prevent war," they say, bitterly, "so what use is it?" Evidently, then, they expected it to, wanted it to, and even thought it might do so. They forget that it couldn't do so, any more than the earliest Church could have prevented Christ's crucifixion. If men are set on evil, then unless the Church has, and successfully takes, its chance to do its own work and change men's hearts, the evil will be done. That does not mean that the Church fails, for it increasingly makes men ashamed of evil, as it has in the last hundred years done something to make men ashamed of war. (With one exception, no longer do nations go to war on a slight or flimsy pretext.) And when evil is done, the Church seeks to turn it, as far as may be, into an asset. That very Cross which could not be prevented is now the Church's greatest asset.

The truth about the constant criticism of the Church, in my view, is that those who make it—not usually its

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

members—regard the Church as an embodiment of such idealism as is left in the world. So whenever that idealism is assailed or eclipsed at any point, such as war between great and so-called Christian nations, the criticism of the Church's failure is heard again in the land. It may be the defalcation of some individual, or it may be a world catastrophe, but the psychology behind the criticism is the same.

It is worth while asserting, especially at such a time as this, when churches are not as full as they once were and there is the *appearance* of failure, what to real members of the Church was never in doubt: that the Church cannot fail; if only, among other reasons, because it is a divine society. It was not begun on earth, but in heaven. And it "came down from heaven." It was not begun when Jesus called men into fellowship with Him, though that was the beginning of the Church *on earth*. That earthly fellowship was only a projection or image of the fellowship of souls with God from everlasting to everlasting, just as Christ Himself was a Projection in terms of a human life, lived out in space and time, of God Himself. We recognize this at Holy Communion when we say, "Therefore with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious name." We realize that the Church includes not only all who love Christ on earth and those who have loved Christ here and passed from this sphere to the unseen, but also those who have always and only lived in the unseen: angels and archangels and all the company of heaven.

The Church on earth—by which I mean all who love and try to serve Jesus Christ, whatever their label—is essentially spiritual, and if all of us now in that community on earth were wiped out, our buildings destroyed, our organization ended, the Church would

## "WHERE DOES THE CHURCH COME IN?"

be alive, for it is in the unseen, and sooner or later other forms of it in terms of human fellowships would arise. It does not matter if you destroy all the copies of a snapshot that have been printed, so long as the negative is in safe hands. All Christian communions on earth are feeble prints from an original negative which is in Heaven, and no storms of earth can touch that.

This thought, at such a time as this, gives to my own mind a sense of peace as I watch so many lovely earth-dreams being shattered. Evil can only tear up photographs. God holds the negative. And when evil has done its worst, men will begin again to translate into terms of human fellowship and action the dream which dwells immortal and secure forever in the heart of God.

Indeed, the comfort is greater than that. For throughout all history the Church's witness has ever been most potent when she herself has been persecuted and despised. No one who knows his church history would claim that the high peaks of the Church's power in the world were those days when she was smiled on by the world and had the support of princes and potentates. The Church was never so powerful as when, keeping sincerely her true purpose before her, she was in ill-odor, when her members were few, and when it was costly, and even physically dangerous, to belong to her.

These thoughts, of course, however comforting, must not allow us to sink into complacency. How wildly we swing from complacency to panic and back again to complacency! Many things cry aloud to be done: the healing of our divisions—for how can we get the nations together, which differ so fundamentally, if we cannot get the churches together, whose loyalty is one?

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

—the surgical treatment of our adhesions to a spurious orthodoxy, bewildering ritual and a meaningless mumbo-jumbo of effete phrases. Most important of all, we must really be a missionary Church, pushing our campaign not merely into obscure parts of the world, which gives the comforting illusion of missionary enterprises and provides material for thrilling speeches and photographs, but pushing our campaign where the missionary spirit is far more needed—into the phases of men's lives so often closed to Christ: men's thinking, men's money-making, men's pleasure-seeking, men's ambitions; men's international relationships, those fields which, because the gospel has not been sown in them, bring forth the dread harvest of tares, in particular those tares which we call war. A missionary just home from India, where such splendid work for Christ is being done, tells me what havoc is being wrought in India, where German and British missionaries work side by side, by the news of the war. No Church is truly missionary which seeks to convert the heathen and yet leaves vast territories of man's activity at home as pagan as any South Sea island could be. Finance, industry, patriotic feeling, education, art, literature, must be regarded from the missionary standpoint and with the missionary fervor, just as much as distant lands. What missionary triumph could be finer, what mass movement more satisfying, than to see the fine young men and women who "adore" modern poetry and music, and who are ready to sacrifice for the ideals they dimly see, wake up to the beauty and dynamic there is in *real* Christianity? Many of us preachers must end our delightful habit of reminiscing about what Jesus did once, and in His name cast out devils *now!*

No! we can never remain complacent while so much

## "WHERE DOES THE CHURCH COME IN?"

remains to be done. But the present situation invites an immediate answer to the question, Where does the Church come in now? May I offer three suggestions?

1. We can offer comfort and encouragement.

I think I feel most sorry in these days for those who have no adequate philosophy of life with which to meet them.

Here is part of a letter I received a short time ago:

"Please forgive my writing to you, . . . but I am desperately miserable. . . . I am twenty-six years of age and married to the (to me) most marvelous man in the world. I want to stress how kind, unselfish, and absolutely good he is."

She goes on to say that he, like herself, was originally religious, and then lost his faith with the passage of the years. She continues:

"With the events of the past few weeks, and the knowledge that in a very short time my husband will, in all probability, be fighting in France, I do so desperately feel the need of some sort of religion, but the blind, unquestioning religion of my youth has no comfort for me. I think this is probably the first time in my life that I have felt the need of religion, but I do know that if I can't find some comfort and some truth, I don't see how I can go on."

If your philosophy of life teaches that this life is all, that there is no God, no purpose or plan being worked out which cannot ultimately fail; if life has no abiding values and if every *spiritual security* is vain, then life now must be a nightmare.

If, on the other hand, you really don't "fear them who can only kill the body and, after that, have no

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

more that they can do"; if you believe in a loving finally omnipotent God who is Himself the most awful casualty in this war, suffering in *all* His children's sins and pain, yet still in charge of His world, still at the wheel, still calm and confident that He can win His world without final loss, a God whose plans go on on the other side of death—why then you have a treasure no hand can touch and no evil can destroy.

### 2. We can offer again the needed power to achieve.

One cannot watch the brave plans of man take shape without being reminded of those buildings scattered over the country and called someone or other's "folly." There is one near Matlock. Someone has had a splendid idea and carried it out, only to find that it lacked something—water, perhaps—by which alone it could be made to function. The building is there, but no life can be sustained in it. The machinery is there, but not the current. The idea, but no power to make it live.

Many of my readers devoured Mr. H. G. Wells's recent letter to *The Times*. Indeed, consider all the schemes which that brilliant thinker, and others writing from the same point of view, have put forward for a better world. The Church does not scorn them, but she writes for them all a label which damns them. They are humanist. By this is meant that they presuppose that in man alone is all the power necessary to make the machine function. And, frankly, it doesn't come off. The promised glories do not appear. The goods promised are not delivered.

Do you recall how often it has been said that no problem existed between this nation and that, or between this party and that, which, "given good will," could not be settled amicably round the conference table? But it is just that good will which is lacking,

## "WHERE DOES THE CHURCH COME IN?"

and I don't know anything that creates it save the spirit of Him who came to bring peace and good will to men.

One wonders what, in his soul of souls, the young Nazi thinks now that the Fuehrer's plans have unfolded. Where is the promised Arcady?—a reign of terror, insufficient food and war thundering at the gates. Arcady is not in Nazism, nor in Communism, if reports from Russia be true, nor in the strange mixture of the two, tried for the first time, nor in Fascism, though each ideology holds a shred of truth and all have called forth sacrifice and self-discipline which are not without challenge to the Christian.

We need not scorn others. The League of Nations, very much our own concern, hasn't worked. And to change the names, and speak of Federal Union, won't accomplish the magic which changes the turnip into the fairy coach, unless a new spirit is allowed to work in the hearts of men. And the spirit is the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ. That may sound pious, but it is true. He who called Matthew the publican and Simon the zealot, a man who, by the most solemn vows, was pledged to stick his knife into any publican he encountered, He who could weld them into a fellowship which spread to the ends of the earth, can do the same for nations. But man-made plans alone will not accomplish it.

At a time when tension was high between Germany and Italy on the one hand and ourselves on the other, I watched a crowd of people leaving the Queen's Hall after a Sunday afternoon concert there.

The crowd obviously contained Jews and Jewesses, Africans, Indians, as well as every kind of Britisher.

Their faces were flushed and excited with pleasure. They had been carried up into a world that belongs to

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

all, the world of music. They had been thrilled into a unity.

And to what had they been attending? To an Italian conductor (Toscanini) conducting German music to an English audience containing Jews.

They had been made one in Beethoven. I thought: what could my Master do if only you gave Him the chance? The world is one in its love of art, its search for healing, its quest of truth, but art and science and philosophy have not the dynamic power to weld men into one.

Christ has. And the Church must thus proclaim Him.

The world at the moment is a lunatic asylum. All men want peace except the supermadman. Yet men fight. All men want comfort, in a world which God has filled with good things, yet thousands starve . . . and so one could go on. We did well to call November, 1918, an Armistice. It has lasted twenty-one years, but the same old war goes on in a more frightful form, for men's hearts are never changed by battle, whether they call themselves victors or vanquished. And the state of men's hearts determines the kind of world they live in.

3. We can offer the gospel which changes men's lives.

Peace, after all, is a by-product. The Church can't do much by telling statesmen how to do their job or criticizing them when they've done it. It can't do much by sending up resolutions carried unanimously by men who never have to carry the responsibilities involved. Nor does it help when the Church pretends to economical authority.

But by concentrating on that power from God which can change lives, a power we must seek to see released in every phase of men's activities—for the

## "WHERE DOES THE CHURCH COME IN?"

world is His not geographically only, but in every way: industrially, culturally, scientifically—we can not only do our true work as a Church, but do the thing which at the moment most needs doing.

Certainly we may, and must, say that war is wrong. Even though we think that to stand aside would be a greater wrong, we must always condemn war as a grievous wrong. But merely to pass a resolution that "war is incompatible with the spirit of Jesus Christ" is like a medical conference passing a resolution that "cancer is incompatible with the spirit of health." Our medical friends concentrate on the *cause* unremittingly. So must we. The cause is the state of men's hearts, and the cure may be a long time coming, through the blindness and stupidity of our hearts, but at least we know it will come; for though we see not yet all things subjected to Him . . . we behold Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honor. The Church often stumbles, often errs, often does silly and even sinful things. The only thing it can't do is to fail. Christ is greater than Hitler. Say that to yourself many times, and let this story push it home.

"In the first days of the Christian persecutions a young Christian boy was passing into the arena to be thrown to the beasts. As he passed through the gates a Roman soldier standing there whispered sardonically to him, 'And where is your carpenter's Son now?' Quick as a flash came the answer: 'He is making a coffin for your Emperor.' "

From the same fine book—Bishop Crotty's Lenten Book—I borrow another parable which rounds off this chapter. A clergyman was wrestling one Saturday evening with his sermons, and was continually plagued

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

by his small daughter, who kept interrupting him. Unwilling to turn her out of the study, he wondered how on earth he could amuse her. His eyes fell on a map of Europe lying on his table. He picked it up, cut it with a sharp knife into innumerable small pieces and, giving them to her, told her to reassemble the map. Thinking he would thus keep her quiet, he turned to his work again. To his astonishment, in a few moments she was back at his desk with every fragment in its place. When he asked her how she had managed it, she said simply, "Well, you see, Daddy, there was the picture of a man on the back of the map, and I found when I got the man right, Europe came right."

The Church comes in just here. Her job is not that of the politician or the economist. It is to help God get man right, and that for the sake of God's glory, not merely man's comfort. When man is right, the world will come right.

So follow two pertinent questions: Is God having a chance every day to get *you* right? And, secondly, are you praying for Hitler and those who advise him every day?

## CHAPTER VI

### LET'S TRY TO UNDERSTAND THE ENEMY

THE Church can help in a further way.

During the progress of the war she can do her utmost—and no contribution could be of greater national importance—to keep the life and thought of the nation free from bitterness and hate. Usually, as war extends from weeks to months, as people lose their beloved sons and brothers and husbands, as newspapers, even the best, tend to show every activity of the "enemy" as wrong and our own right, as courtesy diminishes (one notices, for instance, that the radio broadcaster who used to speak of Herr von Ribbentrop now speaks of Ribbentrop, and jokes which would have been censored as bad taste are now allowed), people begin to allow bitterness and resentment and hate to take possession of their lives.

I well remember a man who was a sincere Christian in the last war, allowing himself to say in public, after he had lost his boy at the front, that "the only good German was a dead German." In some places even German music was hissed as unpatriotic and a German tune would scandalize a congregation.

We need not recall those unhappy days. Our spirit in Britain as I write these words (October, 1939) is excellent. Well did Mr. Chamberlain say that we were not at war with the German people and had no quarrel with them save that they maintained in power a Government which was a menace to all the highest values in human life.

To exclude bitterness is essential for the well-being of our own souls, since bitterness is a disease of the soul.

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

Bitterness even affects our bodies. "Half a dozen bitter words," Sir Maurice Craig of Harley Street used to say, "and the very pepsin of your stomach loses its power." At the inquest on a dead baby after its mother had suckled it, a specialist said the baby was poisoned by breast milk which had become toxic owing to bitter hatred which possessed the mother's mind at the time. Bitterness grows as war continues and more and more men are lost. And bitterness is projected from its cause onto everything around us until we grow into bad-tempered old men and women. War may break our bodies and affect our minds and nerves, but spiritually we are invulnerable from without. But bitterness through war can bring us down spiritually because it operates from within. We must guard our thoughts in Christ Jesus.

Bitterness is born not only from loss of dear ones, but also from disappointment with God. "Why doesn't God stop it?" we ask, forgetting that we never decide *when* He should do so. Should it be by a dictatorship now?—But we hate dictatorships. Should He have stopped it at Munich, at Versailles, in 1914? When did it really *begin* to foment?—We see that to stop this war God would have to have refrained from making man at all.

Bitterness is born of disappointment with men. We lose faith in human nature. But we must judge human nature by its best, and remember that if man's goodness is to have worth, he must be free to exert all his powers in doing evil. The measure of his devilry is the measure of his capacity for saintliness, and his power to do evil is power lent to him by God. We must hate what men do, but love men, and the more we understand the paths their minds have followed, the more we shall exclude bitterness.

## LET'S TRY TO UNDERSTAND THE ENEMY

The exclusion of bitterness is essential if we are going to remain sensitive enough to God to find His guidance as to the successive steps of this dark road. It is further essential if we are going to do what the churches *could* do: provide an atmosphere in which a bad peace is impossible.

Without "crabbing" our own country, I am quite sure that we must remain penitent rather than proud. The dread dilemma forced upon us in which either to fight or not to fight is wrong, is due to the sin of the world, and we are not guiltless there.

The Treaty of Versailles is possibly not so full of vindictiveness as the terms which would have been imposed on us if Germany had won,<sup>1</sup> but its bitterness made the soil fertile for the growth of Hitlerism, which would never have arisen but for Versailles. Few influential voices were raised in protest. We were worn out mentally, physically, financially, emotionally. We had lost our dear ones and college chums, and, while many of us wanted no revenge, we were too tired to rise up in hot indignation against the measures taken by politicians against our late enemy. We see, now it is too late, that a generous gesture to Germany in 1918 would have prevented this war altogether.

But, to a nation beaten and crushed by arms, we continued a food blockade for months which sentenced many children to death, and many others to starvation and disease. A friend of mine, a professor in a German college, said to me: "It was hard to forgive you when, having won the war, you wouldn't stop torturing us. My daughter died because I could not get the food she needed." He is a Christian minister as well as a professor and loved his daughter as I love mine.

---

<sup>1</sup> According to Norah Waln (*Reaching Towards the Stars*) a German was sent to a concentration camp for saying this.

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

The French put black troops on the Rhine, and young German girls were taken from good homes to satisfy their lust. Supposing our daughters had been involved! Another German friend of mine was struck across the face with a whip by a French officer for not stepping off the pavement and raising his hat when the French officer came down the street. The Ruhr occupation, reparation—we demanded from Germany more gold than there is in the whole world—inflation, bankruptcy, and an England that kept on crying, "Hang the Kaiser," and still hated a fallen foe, all played their part in humiliating Germany to the dust. Remember the war-guilt clause, the surrendered navy, the disarmament, the utter humiliation!

The truth is that we threw away the peace for which brave men died in the Great War by imposing terms on the enemy which the soldiers who fought would never have imposed, terms so bitter that, sooner or later, a revolt against them was inevitable.

Is it any wonder that a "deliverer" should arise, and is it any wonder that that deliverer should have an immense reception when he showed the energy and purpose to remove the reproach of Germany and lift her out of the morass of inferiority in which, quite frankly, we seemed ready to let her wallow forever without trying to give her back her self-respect?

These are not the pages in which to embark on a tracing of the rise of Hitlerism. I am not a competent enough historian to present the facts, giving them their due weight of importance and estimating their significance. And it is far from my purpose to whitewash the red track which the movement has followed.

But it has helped me to keep bitterness from my own spirit, to see our own share in what has happened, and to try to understand the enigma of Hitler's personality.

## LET'S TRY TO UNDERSTAND THE ENEMY

I regard Adolf Hitler—not unkindly, I hope—as a patient needing treatment. The deplorable thing is that there is no way of insisting on treatment, and his disease is infectious. It has infected Germany, until the Nazi movement is the extension of a diseased personality, for the word “diseased” is not relevant only to bodily ailments, but to psychological conditions. Hitler is a sick man, and Germany is a sick country. The horrors of the concentration camps, carried out, in the main, by boys between seventeen and twenty, reveal a sadistic fury which is pathological and probably not unrelated to sexual perversion. Certainly, Hitler's reactions are pathological. Mr. Chamberlain told half a dozen of us, gathered to meet him in Downing Street, that at Munich Hitler raved and stormed and shouted and stamped as though he were addressing a multitude.

To those who would study Hitler's psychology I would commend the second chapter of Gunther's book, *Inside Europe*. There we have the picture of a cobbler father, truculent and overbearing, who regarded Adolf as a weakling, a worthless dreamer, who called him moonstruck, and bullied and beat him. By the time the dictator's father died, in a drunken brawl in a public house, the son had what psychologists call an “oedipus complex”—a hatred of the father and an almost erotic and passionate love for the mother. He had been jealous of his father's power. His own power had been thwarted. He hated his father, and was glad to see him die.

Shortly afterward his mother, whom he loved dearly, and who was the only woman ever in his life, was seized with cancer, but before she died she fanned ambition in her son to a blaze and planted in him that which quickly took root and flourished—a longing for success

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

and power. Hitler's rise to power and fame is his tribute to the memory of an adored mother.

We see then the neurotic youth, starved of power, with a personal burning sense of injustice from his father, and a longing to hit out in order to satisfy his own power lust and achieve the fame his mother prayed for.

Turn from that very inadequate but important glimpse to the environment in which the grown-up Hitler found himself. Could any stage have been more perfectly set for him than the stage set by post-war Germany? I believe that it was almost incredible to Germany that she could possibly lose the War. She had been fed on lies. She had put before her pictures of the pride of the supposedly conquering Kaiser. There was the endless singing of "Germany over all," and I believe that it came as a shock to a great many loyal German people when they saw they were going to lose the war.

Now let us put those two things together, and watch this young neurotic fanatic with a gift of words that rouse and burn and inflame, and this Germany, on the other hand, in danger of losing her self-respect and sinking into chronic inferiority.

As you watch the two come together, are you surprised at the present situation?

Let us remember that, since men began to live together in tribes, no tribe has excluded an individual without making a problem. At some cost to the tribe, the difficult person has been subdued and cast out, but what then? His hand is against every man, and every man's hand is against his. He burns with humiliation and shame. He longs for revenge. What does he do? He gathers others like himself. They will stand together and assert their power, and if those who cast

## LET'S TRY TO UNDERSTAND THE ENEMY

them out want anything to do with them, they can only have it on terms of allowing those who cast them out to be subject unto them. Until then (or they are in some other way changed, say by the people who grow impatient of their rule and break their power) their pride will keep them hostile.

Dr. G. F. Morton, in his recent book, *Madhouse for the Million*, has shown this clearly, and it is ably illustrated by the story of Jephthah in Judges 11. In the first few verses of that chapter we have a parallel to those conditions which would help us to understand the psychology of the Nazi movement, the Fascist revolt, and the Berlin-Rome Axis.

We drove postwar Germany into the wilderness of isolation, having beaten her and taken away all her possessions. So the rebels went out and hated, glorying in isolation now. There are no Boy Scouts in Germany, no Rotary Clubs, no Free Churches, no international movements. Resentment and bitter hostility and biting humiliation and smouldering longing for revenge—these were not taken from her, these to a large extent remain.

It is important that the Christian should try to understand the psychology of the situation. What schoolmaster has never turned a boy out of the class, only to find that once in the playground he throws stones at the window, and when he is outside the fellowship the schoolmaster can no longer deal with him?

What employer has not found that to discharge a man will send him to stir up trouble in his union, and possibly cause strike and lockout and conflict? And what psychologist does not know the danger of a lunatic, driven by persecution mania into psychosis, who is afraid, when there is no one threatening him, and lashes out at his warder? In that poor demented mind

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

there is the vicious circle of hate, fear, resentment, bitterness at some real or imagined treatment, on the one hand. That induces a desire to hit out. There are feelings of aggression, and those feelings of aggression lead back to fear, the fear of being attacked.

Germany has suffered for years from persecution mania, and, driven by persecution into hostile resentment, and full of fear, she turns on anyone, Jew, pacifist, preacher, who conceivably does not share her distorted view and is therefore "against her"—and the measure of the persecution is the measure of her fear. It is a fear of attack when there is no basis for such a fear. Italy suffered the same disease when she talked about being *menaced* by Abyssinia and Albania. Germany, if you please, was *menaced* by Czechoslovakia and Poland.

My point, then, is that the situation is pathological, and our first duty is to understand this sick nation. Only as we understand the mental causes and make allowance shall we be able to preserve our own minds from the poison of bitterness.

Dr. William Brown, of Harley Street and Oxford University, has given us a brilliant summary of Hitler's make-up from the psychological point of view, and I have permission to quote it here:

"1. An hysterical tendency, shown in his emotional appeal to crowds, in which his mind seems to undergo temporary dissociation through the very intensity of his concentration upon the matter in hand. With his mind so narrowed down on one point, he may be temporarily oblivious of other considerations, and thus may appear perfidious. There is also a probable hysterical identification, in subconscious phantasy, with Frederick the Great,

## LET'S TRY TO UNDERSTAND THE ENEMY

and a tendency toward a mechanical imitation of the less admirable political maneuvers of him and of Napoleon, which makes him appear, judged by modern standards, as an atavistic monster.

"2. A paranoid tendency, almost amounting to persecutory mania. He is a very aggressive person, and 'projects' this aggressiveness upon the world around him, being acutely on guard against aggression from others, with suspicion and possibly delusions that such hostile aggressiveness is active against himself and his nation. This tendency was favored in its development by the harsh conditions of his early manhood as a lonely outcast in Vienna, although it must have a strong hereditary basis. One important effect of its presence is the fear of encirclement or of being 'ringed round with enemies,' and where encirclement is already a fact—often the result of the paranoid person's own aggressiveness—there is a great intensification of this fear, with a corresponding intensification of aggressiveness.

"3. A growing megalomania, with messianic feelings. This is a further development of his paranoid tendency, making his followers paranoid, and producing a collective paranoia.

"4. A compulsive tendency (in his case, a power impulse) toward more and more 'bloodless' victories, in which his latest claim to territory or power is called his last—compare the alcoholic, who calls his latest drink his last."<sup>2</sup>

If Hitler, then, is a sick man and his nation a sick

---

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, October 19, 1939. My own estimate of Hitler's psychological make-up was published earlier in a pamphlet called *For Such a Time as This* (April, '39).

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

nation, the Church must urge every sound method of healing. There may be a time when no one can do anything with a dangerous lunatic but restrain him, but let it be restraint and only restraint, never mere reprisal.

Let us admit our own folly as at least a factor in causing this sick world to be so sick, and let us realize that we shall never build up a righteous and just peace until we too are ready to make concessions. I do not lessen the iniquity of Hitler's way of annexing countries through fear and violence, by saying that *some* of our own Empire was annexed in a not dissimilar way, though we may claim that the world was younger and more brutal then, and the League of Nations was unheard of, and so were poison gas and the bombing aeroplane and the submarine.

But I have always held that the British Lion must not put down her paws on some of the most advantageous pieces of ground in the world, India, Aden, Gibraltar, Malta, Egypt, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Singapore, South Africa, and many strategic islands of the sea, and then say to other countries, "Let us all sit down in peace together." It was Stresemann who said: "If you had only made one concession I could have kept this German people for peace. That you did not is my tragedy and your crime." When the Church reads in public that the lion shall lie down with the lamb, she ought not to presume that the prophet meant that the latter should be inside the former.

A conference will have to come. Over a million people in this country signed last April (1939) the petition drawn up by the National Peace Council asking the Government to collaborate with the President of the U. S. A. in convening a Peace Conference. I had

## LET'S TRY TO UNDERSTAND THE ENEMY

the honor to be one of those chosen to put this petition before the Prime Minister in his room at the House of Commons. What a tragedy it will be if it can only be arranged after thousands of young men are slain and hate has been built up, if there is a possibility of it being held earlier. Frankly, I was sorry when Hitler's peace proposals were quite so brusquely turned down. I know the fear lest it was only another astute ruse on his part to give him time to prepare and work out the plans mapped out in *Mein Kampf*, but some of us tried hard to get the Government to listen to the following declaration passed by a conference of Free Church ministers in London:

"We welcome the assurance which the Government has already given that the proposals submitted by the German Chancellor will receive a detailed and considered reply. We believe it to be of the utmost importance that the occasion of the reply should be used by Great Britain and France to define as precisely as possible their conception of the structure of a desirable peace.

"In the judgment of this Conference such definition should include redress of the wrong inflicted on the Czechoslovak and Polish peoples, together with the redress of any grievances, economic or other, from which it can be shown that Germany is suffering.

"The Conference hopes that before long the announcement of such proposals by the two Governments may prove a definite step toward the convening of an International Conference in which effective measures may be taken to do away with the recurrent fear of aggression and war, and the constant preparation for it, and may lay firmly the

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

foundations of a new international order on a federal basis."

Our thought was that if a just peace, and not merely "an uneasy truce," could be reached in a conference, it was terrible to think that millions of lives should be thrown away first. For in the end, the matters about which we all feel so strongly will *have* to be settled in conference, and the longer war goes on the more bitter feeling may become and the harder it will be to make just terms. If, to put it colloquially, we had said to Hitler: "If you want a conference we can't think why you didn't agree to one when *we* pressed one on you, and not only we, but the Pope, the Duce, the President of the U. S. A., and others. But even now, if you want a conference and will come to it prepared to put on the agenda a discussion about Poland, Memel, Czechoslovakia, we will meet you, and we too will be prepared to make concessions." If Hitler had refused to come, or refused to confer, or refused to listen to *our* proposals, then the onus of continuing the war would have been on him, and not even he could have made it appear that it was on us. Further, neutral countries, unwilling to join in conflict, might have joined in a conference, and, if they had all come to a common mind, it might have been possible to persuade the German people—that lovable nation with whom we have so much in common but who are too blind or too much afraid to throw off the Hitler yoke—that their Fuehrer was leading them along a path that must lead to chaos. Our great hope, it seems to me, is that the German nation will wake up in time, and even now I hope and pray and am working—as far as the little I can do counts for anything—for that kind of conference from which alone a peace based on justice

## LET'S TRY TO UNDERSTAND THE ENEMY

and guaranteeing security and freedom can come to the nations.

The longer war goes on, the harder it will be—because of the spread of bitterness and the desire for revenge—to build the only kind of peace that will last. We speak of "smashing Hitlerism," but while that is a worthy aim, the method is one which smashes tens of thousands who don't in their hearts want Hitlerism and we lose tens of thousands of our own dear sons. A conference was held *after* the last war. Let us hold a conference now. If a righteous peace can only be reached through a long war, the Church must be the last to admit it, and then only after every other method has been exhausted. Just now there is good feeling toward the German *people*. It won't last forever. We ought to capitalize it while it lasts. The war at the moment is growingly unpopular and if it were stopped, it would be hard to start it again. One thing must be made clear to our enemies: that Christian people must never allow another Versailles.

I found after I had written the above that *The Times* of October 23 reports a speech of Mr. Lloyd George at Caernarvon in which, better than I could put it, he says in effect the same thing. I quote two paragraphs:

"He had thought that if there were an opportunity of achieving our aims by peaceful means now, it was better than running tremendous risks and incurring terrible sacrifices to achieve at the end terms which might not be better than those we had a chance of securing now, provided we obtained the presence and help at an international conference of neutral States who were as anxious as we were to avert the consequences of a long war.

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

"At present France and ourselves were both fully armed for war, and the whole Empire was coming to our aid. If we entered into a peace conference today, it would no longer be a Munich with its unready forces and its shivering diplomats bullied and hectored by the German dictator. If, as the discussions went on, it became clear that Hitler had no intention of doing justice and that he meant to cling with greedy tenacity to his conquest, we could quit the conference and resume the struggle with a clear conscience. The whole world would acknowledge that the responsibility for plunging mankind into the catastrophe of war rested entirely with Herr Hitler."

Sir Stafford Cripps made a similar suggestion in *The Tribune*. He suggested that the answer should be that

"if Germany is prepared to give up her conquests of non-German peoples and to deal with minorities under a truly international system in which all the nations shall partake of the administration, then we are prepared to do the same as regards the British Empire and enter into an economic arrangement whereby all the resources of our various countries are pooled for the benefit of the world through the control of an economic general planning staff, drawn from all countries, by a scheme to be worked out by the nations forthwith, as a permanent basis for world peace and to be accompanied by rapid disarmament on all sides by successive stages."

Is it really necessary to slaughter millions, and to be slaughtered, to prove to the German people that the crime of Hitlerism must stop? If it is necessary, the Church should be the last to admit it and the

## LET'S TRY TO UNDERSTAND THE ENEMY

first to accept the better way of the council table. Surely some kind of safeguards could be devised against further treachery and destruction.

The Church cannot do a greater thing for the nation in time of bitterness than to keep the people's minds free from bitterness and despair. The Church may feel as I do, that she must reluctantly acquiesce in war as the lesser of two evils, one of which the corporate sin of the world thrusts upon her as an unescapable choice. The Church can hardly bless war, though she must honor courage wherever it is found. If there is a glimmer of hope that an honorable way can be found to establish peace, the Church must press for it, and discourage all talk of "smashing Hitlerism" in order to dictate conditions to a beaten enemy. If conciliation can effect a righteous peace, the Church must do all she knows to promote it, for the Church has her sons and daughters, loyal and true to Christ, in what is called the enemy country, and if the evils in a regime can be ended without further bloodshed, let us take that way. No sacrifice of "face" is too great if the worthy aims we have set before us can be achieved without slaughter.

Further, the Church comes in on the matter of prayer, but this demands a new chapter.

## CHAPTER VII

### CAN WE PRAY ABOUT WAR?

If ever there were a time when one felt the need of prayer it is surely now. God seems about the only unshakable Fact left in the universe. We long for the peace and strength which come from a sense of unity with Him. We long to pour out before Him our personal troubles. With even greater desire we long to commend to Him our dear ones, some of them at this moment in places of terrifying danger, and others hastening to posts of duty, so that we feel we simply cannot bear the anxiety alone.

Yet, for many, there is hesitation on the very threshold of the place of prayer. Has it not been said that war is God's judgment on all the nations? So isn't prayer like asking a judge to let a criminal off when the jury has found him deserving of punishment? And can we seek unity with a God of love and peace while we busy ourselves with ways of destroying those who are also His children? And are not the German people also praying to Him for *their* cause and *their* dear ones? And can prayer deflect a bullet or protect a loved one against a bursting bomb? So what's the good of praying, anyway?

I want to write some word to try to help men and women who are puzzled and bewildered, and some who are almost frantic with trying to puzzle things out.

And I am quite sure that the first word I must write is this: "When in doubt, pray." You may offer a foolish prayer, a selfish prayer, a sentimental prayer, a prayer that God cannot answer as you want it answered (obviously He can't give victory to both sides),

## CAN WE PRAY ABOUT WAR?

or a prayer God must not answer—for example, to unleash a legion of angels to guard your particular loved one. But don't let any scruples of this sort stop you from praying. You are God's child, in God's world, and God loves you and longs for you more than you have ever wanted Him in your life. He is not going to turn a deaf ear to you because you have not prayed lately, or because you have not thought your way through things, or even because your faith in the business is less than a very small mustard seed. If you feel the impulse to pray, or even if you do not, then you pray. Tell God that you don't believe much in prayer, and you don't quite know what you want, or how to ask for it, or if it's any good asking for anything. For one of the great objects of prayer is that you and God should be brought together. Pour out your heart and all its worries to Him without waiting to know if the kind of answer you want is scientifically possible. Just as any real father longs to have his little child in his arms, whatever the conditions which bring him there, so—and do try to believe this—God longs to have you end the estrangement that may have developed between you and Himself. You do not want God with a millionth of the desire He has for you, so take your half-ounce of faith and your ton of doubt and bewilderment and anxiety and worry and sorrow and make a beginning. He is waiting. No! He is even now tapping at your door. Don't let anything stop you. Pray!

But what is prayer? It is important to start with that question, although volumes have been written to answer it, and our answer cannot here be complete. It is important, however, because to misunderstand the nature and purpose of prayer is to become disappointed when the results are not what we hoped. "God

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

let me down," said a young fellow to a friend of mine. "My brother was wounded in the War. I prayed to Him that my brother might live. Any decent person would have answered. He did not. My brother died. I have no faith left." Some prayers are just selfish expressions of the self-preservation instinct, an appeal that we should be kept from danger. Others are an appeal for special protection for our loved ones, that God would be their Shield, a figure of speech in regard to God which the highest authority in religion, Jesus, contradicted.<sup>1</sup> Others are appeals that matters shall turn out as *we* think they ought to do from our standpoint of the well-being of the nation or that of the general comfort and happiness of mankind.

It is gratifying when prayer is answered in the way we think it should be, but we need to understand what prayer aims at. When we do that, we shall see that there cannot be any such thing as unanswered prayer, any more than there exists a loving human father who, when his little child tugged at his coat, would avert his glance, maintain a stony silence and pass on his way without a glimmer of recognition.

Prayer, as I understand it, seeks primarily communion with God. That communion is not sought for our own sake, but for God's also. Prayer is not a kind of spiritual medicine which it does one good to take, a kind of ointment for sore hearts, a spiritual sedative for inflamed nerves. It is far from being a mere penny-in-the-slot way of getting God to give us things. It may begin on lowly levels, but, as God's nature is increasingly understood, it quickly moves from "Give me," to "Make me," and on to "Show me."

---

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 10. 23; John 15. 20, 16. 2. All scholars agree that the end of Saint Mark's Gospel, including verse 18 of the last chapter, is not an authentic part of the original.

## CAN WE PRAY ABOUT WAR?

The highest prayer I imagine simply to be adoration of the revealed nature of the Highest, and a longing *at all costs* to be caught up into God's purposes.

Let us admit thankfully the wonderful tonic for the mind which prayer can be, the wonderful sense of peace which it can and does bring. But if it comes to be engaged in solely for this purpose, it will cease to be in any real sense Christian prayer and become a psychological trick to soothe the nerves, rather in the same category as the methods of meditation practiced by pagans long before the time of Christ. It will not be without use, but it will lack the splendid dynamic and far-reaching objective results of true prayer. It will become a subjective orgy without disciplinary value, and it will suffer a rude awakening from the shock of reality—so rude, in fact, as sometimes to break the dreamer as well as the dream.

Our communion with God, then, aims at co-operation with Him, since, in His infinite humility, He has decreed that only in co-operation with Him can certain things be done. "Without us, God will not. Without God, we cannot."

In our prayer we are not telling God something He doesn't know. We are not persuading a reluctant God to intervene. We are trying to align ourselves with His will, in order, either by our faith and love to produce an atmosphere in which His spiritual energies can more potently work, or/and become ourselves the spearhead of His plans, the means, physical and mental and spiritual, by which those plans are carried out in the earth: to ask God, not to do something *for* us, but to do something *in* us that He may do something *through* us. "*Laborare est orare*" ("To labor is to pray") may be true, though it has always seemed to me a dangerous adage supporting my own temptation to

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

"get on with my work" instead of giving sufficient time to quiet and prayer. But I am sure that "*orare est laborare*" ("To pray is to labor") is an adage we must never overlook.

To take two simple illustrations of these sentences: If I pray for a man who is desperately ill, my faith for him<sup>2</sup> by psychic telepathy, or other not clearly understood means, may so affect his mind, even on unconscious levels, that God's healing energies may be rendered far more potent, and there follows a cure which is a modern illustration of Saint James's great word that the prayer of faith shall save the sick.<sup>3</sup>

If I pray for the poor, however, then, beyond all prayer which stops short of outward action, I must be the spearhead of the will of God as I see it. The prayer of communion with God will inspire me and empower me to minister to the unprivileged, either by dealing with cases of poverty known to me or/and by working to alter the whole basis of a society so pagan that it complacently allows one man to treat his dog better than another man can afford to treat his child.

Now we come to the difficult matter of prayer for the nation in time of war.

First of all, in accordance with what is written above, let a man pray. Let him not be put off from communion with God, whatever the measure of his faith or the chaotic state of his ideas.

But, secondly, I think it possible that a Christian man's thought at this time might follow the line of

<sup>2</sup> Mark 2. 5. "Jesus, seeing *their* faith."

<sup>3</sup> James 5. 15. I have worked this out in a chapter, "Healing Through Prayer." See *The Eternal Voice*, p. 207. The Abingdon Press.

## CAN WE PRAY ABOUT WAR?

my own which I have set down in the earlier pages of this book and which, at risk of boring repetition, I will summarize again. We all have to think things out for ourselves, and our prayer will reflect our thoughts, both in what we expect from God and also in what we are inspired to do.

I cannot possibly identify war with the will of God. War is not a police function, which only punishes the aggressors and rarely deals out death even to them. War means the death and suffering of countless thousands of women and children as well as men. Moreover, many of the sufferers will be my fellow Christians with whom I have as much or more in common than I have with many proud pagans in my own land. I loathe the whole ghastly business of war. I cannot even find pleasure in the victories of my own side for thinking of German children crying in vain for fathers whom they love as much as my children love me. I had supposed that 1918 meant the end of war—as far as my nation was concerned—forever.

But I am caught up in the dilemma that if I give my vote against war—which I would if there were any other effective way of restraining evil—I am enlarging the area in the world in which evil is rampant: an evil in terms of broken promises, persecution of Christian people, torturing of Jews, denial of freedom, suppression of truth, imprisonment of pastors, the training of little children's minds to worship the idols of force and a pagan State. *And all this evil is the more menacing and terrible because it is raised to a cult.* For in Nazi Germany, if we only take facts of which we can be certain, hatred, lying, treachery, cool and calculated cruelty are raised to a policy in which men are asked to rejoice, and thousands of people are being made to believe that they contribute to the final good

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

of Germany, and can thus build up her temple of idealism, shielding her from the wicked machinations of Britain and France.<sup>4</sup>

My hatred of war, my love of peace, if they led me to give my vote against the use of force in certain issues, would take from other members of small States all hope of freedom, all the ideals of justice, all that makes life most worth living.

So, as we saw, the sin of the whole world brings a calamity in which it is sometimes right to do wrong, in the sense that it is a greater right than to do nothing.

I feel I can pray for victory for the power now being exerted to put down, and limit the sphere of action of, the evil we call Nazism. I hope I should be a pacifist in any issue which only involved myself, but I feel I must not refuse a method, however terrible, if it is the only method I can use which saves countless thousands from unspeakable evil. I must not allow the horror and beastliness of war to stop me from thinking things through. "We never pray, I am sure," writes Dr. Nathaniel Micklem, of Mansfield College, Oxford, "that God will sharpen the bayonets and sanctify the range-finding of those we love. We cannot quite pray that. We will pray, rather, that through all this dreadful business God's overruling providence will bring His good out of our evil."<sup>5</sup> Thus we shall be praying for the victory of God's Kingdom while we take the only way open to us by which the kingdom of evil is prevented from spreading through the world.

Our thinking must go farther than that. There must have been many pious Jews in our Lord's day,

<sup>4</sup> Von Ribbentrop told his audience at Danzig (October 22, 1939) that Britain had planned this war for years, though he had consistently instructed Hitler that nothing could make England go to war.

<sup>5</sup> *British Weekly*, October 12, 1939.

## CAN WE PRAY ABOUT WAR?

and subsequently, who were praying for a Kingdom of God in terms of their own thinking. It is difficult to get the viewpoint of such men. We are looking backward. We wonder at their blindness when Jesus tried to show them the inwardness of the Kingdom. They wanted the overthrow of Rome, the setting up of a Messiah-King, a new social order, and many of the things for which we are now fighting. When Jesus was crucified, and later, when Jerusalem was sacked by Titus in 70 A. D., *they must have felt as we should feel if we lost the war.* Did not God then defend the right? Was it His will that tyranny should flourish?

I am writing now some very hard words. I don't think we shall lose, but if we did, if Russian hordes with their godless Communism swept over all Europe—and that is the real danger in beating Germany to her knees—God would not lose, though His kingdom would be hindered and thousands of young lives brought up in the belief that evil was good and good evil. The important thing in all prayer is to keep close to God. And hard though it would be to see it happen, it is yet true that God could do more with a defeated nation dedicated to Him than with a victorious nation that became proud and revengeful. *And that might be His way.* He has taken that way before. So we can only pray for *our* victory to the extent to which God can use it to win His victory in the world.

The whole point for me is lit up by the fine story of the three men in the fiery furnace.<sup>6</sup> They are threatened by Nebuchadnezzar with this terrible torture unless they will fall down and worship the golden image which he has set up. They make this sublime retort. "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us

---

\* Daniel 3. 17, 18.

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

from the burning, fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thy hand. . . . But if not, be it known to thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

It may be that a fiery furnace awaits us all these days. Our God *could* deliver us from it, but perhaps He *must* not yet, and the reasons, some of which we can see, and related to man's free will, and the way we are all linked in one family, so that we gain and lose by the family merits and sins, are not all clear to us. But if He does not, we shall still believe in Him, and we shall believe that the values we have learned are the things that matter and the things that cannot die.

"I know that right is right; that givers shall increase,  
That duty lights the way for the beautiful feet of peace;  
That courage is better than fear, and faith is truer than doubt.  
And fierce though the fiends may fight, and long though the  
angels hide,  
I know that Truth and Right have the Universe on their side;  
And that somewhere beyond the stars is a Love that is stronger  
than hate;  
When the night unlocks her bars, I shall see Him—and I will  
wait."

It is natural to pray to escape these fiery ordeals. Our Lord did. He who had said, "All things are possible to him that believeth,"<sup>7</sup> said, "If it be possible let this cup pass."<sup>8</sup> But He went on to say, *But if not . . . if that must not be, THY will, in these grim circumstances, this hour of the power of darkness, be done.*<sup>9</sup>

And if the fiery furnace comes, then with us, as with those three brave men of long ago, there will be One in the midst like unto the Son of man, and whether England wins or loses, whether you and I live or die,

<sup>7</sup> Mark 9. 23.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 26. 39.

<sup>9</sup> See Luke 22. 53.

## CAN WE PRAY ABOUT WAR?

that Strong Son of God will vindicate all our values at last.

I can only pray, as far as the nation goes, in some such way as this:

"O God, who dost understand the dreadful path which now our feet must tread, have mercy on all who serve and suffer, that the reign of cruelty and terror and persecution may be ended. Grant that soon men may see the ghastly folly of war and learn a new way; that soon may dawn a day when the people of all lands shall be free and happy, and share as brothers the good things of this Thy lovely earth.

"Forgive our enemies and grant that those who sway their counsels may learn Thy truth.

"Forgive us for our share in the sin of all the world which has brought to so many the fruit of these terrible days. Keep us from the bitterness of hatred, the temptation to revenge, and the pessimism of despair. Make us sensitive to any possibility of ending conflict and building up a just and righteous peace. If victory is vouchsafed to us, give us generosity of mind and heart to quickly restore the broken fellowship of nations, and to think not only of what *we* see to be wrong and unjust, but to look with sympathy and a readiness to make concessions on the injustice of which our enemies complain. If victory cannot, or must not be, then in the secret place of all our hearts make us calm and trustful, knowing that still Thou dost reign, and that at last Thy kingdom of love and brotherhood *must* have dominion, and every dark problem be illumined by the rays of Thine eternal truth.

"Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

Now, let us think about prayer for the individual. Your son is at the front already, perhaps, or shortly going. One of my friends has two boys, both airmen

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

constantly over the German lines. How can he help praying? Perhaps your children have been evacuated, or your job has just disappeared through the war, or your friends are living in a dangerous area and you are afraid for them. Of course you will pray. But what will be the picture behind your mind as you pray?

I know you won't think that your prayer will deflect a shell or alter the course of a bullet. I am not going to argue here about what God can do or can't do. I am going to talk about certain things God must not do. One of them, for instance, is to make your prayer a safety device for your loved one, like a kind of magical and secret suit of mail.

Mind, that doesn't mean that you must stop praying. It doesn't mean you must stop praying for your loved one's safety. It does mean that if he gets killed or hurt, you must not lose your faith in God. For perhaps God must not save your dear one.

Let us look at that last sentence more closely. If God can save your dear one without being less than God, He will do so; but let us realize that He would be less than God if He followed any one of four courses.

1. If He had favorites—no wise parent wants favors for his schoolboy son because he, the father, knows the headmaster and has put in a petition for special concessions and preferential treatment.

2. If He violated by magic the operation of His own laws—to do that He would confess them inadequate for certain situations. The interplay of God's laws is complex enough to allow God to do anything which is governed by holy love and which is a normal expression of power governed by perfect wisdom. But the stroke of a hammer on a nail did not miss or fail in its end because the nail was driven through the hand of Christ. The same is true of the force and direction

## CAN WE PRAY ABOUT WAR?

of a bullet. The reign of law must be inviolate, or the universe would be a chaotic madhouse in which nothing could be learned.

3. If He interfered, in answer to prayer, to do for His children what it is His will they should learn to do themselves. One has seen parents, in answer to a child's prayer, "intervene" to do his homework for him. The result is chaos in the class, confusion for the teacher, and a definite disservice to the child. We've got to struggle and suffer in order to learn. All our troubles at the moment are due to the dictatorships which end freedom, and here we are praying to God to act like a dictator and end our freedom to save us from sufferings, part of which are our own fault. In a crisis we want a God who forces His will upon us. If He did, our virtue would be nullified and our growth of character ended.

4. If He allowed the answer to an individual prayer to militate against the final well-being of His whole human family.

When the consequences of sin have to be met, as they have in any war, the innocent suffer with the guilty.<sup>10</sup> The laws which bind us together and make all humanity one family, which bring to the individual almost everything of value which he possesses from the goodness and cleverness of other members of the family, inevitably bring to the individual also the evil results of the badness of other members of the family.

That "family basis" of life is obviously better than an "individual basis." It is better to gain and lose because you belong to the human family, than never to suffer, but never to enjoy the things that come to one through belonging to the family. Could you get

---

<sup>10</sup>I have tried to explain this in *Why Do Men Suffer?* The Abingdon Press.

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

through one day if nothing came to your hand save what your own energies had created? I should have to lay down this pen, to begin with! So we must lose and suffer for the sins of the family; and the German nation is part of that family as much as we are.

So, if your loved one suffers, it is not that God is angry with him or is punishing either you or him: it is that on your loved one has fallen part, and a heavy part, of the burden of the family sins which ultimately we must all bear, and which God eternally bears Himself.

It may be that your prayer is that kind of co-operation with God which makes it possible for God to do what you ask. But it may be that God must not answer your prayer in the way you ask, for to do so would be to act in a way unworthy of Himself. Go on praying, and praying for your loved one's safety. Indeed, if I foolishly said you must not, or that it made no difference, you still would, and you would be right, for it is right for a child to take *any* problem puzzling him to his father. But don't lose faith in God if He must not answer yet in your way.

I say "yet" because, although we think of death as the greatest calamity, it cannot be so to God. You would not feel very deeply aggrieved if your loved one had to be removed, say, from New York to San Francisco. Yet in God's perspective a move from this world to the next, from the seen to the unseen, does not, I think, more interfere with His age-long purposes than the other, though we cannot see that to be so now.

We shall get light on our problems—as we do in most problems—if we turn to Jesus.

Look first at His prayers. I find that, concerning one whom He dearly loved, He never prayed for his safety. He, rather, hinted that that was more than

## CAN WE PRAY ABOUT WAR?

doubtful.<sup>11</sup> But, He said, "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not."<sup>12</sup> A failure of faith would have frustrated God's plans far more than a noble death. That prayer for faith for Peter was wholly in line with God's will and to answer it was a godlike thing, and the prayer *was* answered.

I would like my dear ones to pray for my safety. I would like to think that my safety mattered so much to them that they couldn't help praying about it. I think, though, that I would be even more proud of them if they added—"But if this may not be, may his faith in Thee remain unshaken, his courage unbroken, his serenity undisturbed to the last."

"So be my passing,  
My task accomplished and the long day done,  
My wages taken, and in my heart  
Some late lark singing,  
Let me be gathered to the quiet west,  
The sundown, splendid and serene  
Death."<sup>13</sup>

Look, secondly, at Christ's example. He was human enough to pray for safety, not for Himself, but because of all that waited to be done, all that He longed to do. (He was so young to die!) "Oh, my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass."—I suppose it *was* possible. Twelve legions of angels waited to break through, and one angel would have been enough to rout His foes. But God must not act in an ungodlike way. The angels were held back in a leash which was ultimate love. The awful thing happened. Those who say that goodness must triumph and that God will defend the right, as we understand the word "defend," must look again at the Cross. But His *faith* never wavered, and because

---

<sup>11</sup> John 21. 18.

<sup>12</sup> Luke 22. 52.

<sup>13</sup> W. E. Henley, "Margaritae Sorori."

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

of *that*, not His physical safety, the divine purposes were carried through in spite of all that evil could do.

So, as I pray for my dear ones, I pray for their safety because I am human enough to long for their physical companionship, their dear faces, their merry laughter, and all their friendship means. But if the bearing of the sin of the world means that that must not be, I know they are still alive and as much in God's universe as ever. I know they go on—yes, and their merry laughter too—and I shall meet them again.

And more passionately than for their safety I pray for their faith, their courage, their serenity, their un-spoiled witness to the things that are true and noble and lovely, the values that abide. I pray that they may be the kind of men and women whom God can best use, in the seen and in the unseen.

The question of God's will is too big for us here, save to note that it is useful to distinguish between God's ideal will and His dependent will.<sup>14</sup>

Of course it is not God's will that your boy should be shot to pieces. It is God's will that he should live happily and healthily, making life a richer thing for all whose lives touch his. But given war—a man-made, beastly, damnable thing which is not God's will at all—it may be God's will that he should offer his life and take the risks with the rest.

It was not God's will that Jesus should die. But given the Cross—a man-made, damnable, beastly thing, thrust on Jesus by treachery and sin, not by the will of God—it was God's will *under those circumstances* that He should offer His life, yes, and lay it down for the life of the world.

---

<sup>14</sup> I have worked this out in *Discipleship*, p. 102. The Abingdon Press.

## CAN WE PRAY ABOUT WAR?

We cannot, of course, see all the way in these difficult matters, but I'm sure it is a Christian duty to see as far as we may. We *will* make for ourselves hideous mental torments and bitter disappointments by not even trying to understand.

We preachers, I know, are to blame. We will try to be more kind than Jesus was, failing to see that we really make life ultimately more cruel than He did. We let people dally in the Old Testament, praying to a God who is not the God of Jesus, to protect them and keep them safe and bring their loved ones home from the war, and then they get bitterly disappointed and lose their faith in God altogether, which is a greater tragedy than death. I believe it is definitely a disservice to read certain passages of Scripture aloud in these days. Who could read in a service for men leaving for France the 91st psalm?—"A thousand shall fall at thy side and ten thousand at thy right hand, but it shall not come nigh thee." It isn't true. And Jesus contradicted it. "Fear not them which kill the body," He said, "and after that have no more that they can do." He bade us look to a very different kind of God—the God of both Calvary and Easter.

My old friend Studdert Kennedy wrote down some wise words about this matter at the close of the last war:

"It is cruel to be sentimental in this connection and to say that God hears and answers any sort of prayer because the facts are clear against it. I have heard men praying in the line when I wished they would swear instead, because their prayers, which were purely selfish, expressed nothing but a broken will and the horror of death. It is a dreadful sight to see a man whimpering out prayers for personal protection in a time of stress. The hard-bitten man

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

beside him, still unbroken and unbeaten, swearing through his set-teeth, puts such a man to shame. . . . One cannot afford prayers for personal safety in times of stress; it is not what one ought to be thinking about, and it entails an inevitable slackening of that attitude of utter indifference to death and danger which it is one's duty to cultivate. . . . Presumably the early Christians who were burned, tortured, crucified, flung to lions and visited with every imaginable form of pain, were men of prayer, but it never saved their skins. . . . The answer to their prayers is found, not in their escape from death or agony, but in their power to face both with an unbroken spirit and a perfect trust in God."<sup>15</sup>

I don't know, to be quite honest, what the effect of a prayer for the safety of a loved one is. I conceive that it might make a man more alert, more sensitive to danger, more able to evade unnecessary peril; but all that, to be within God's plan, would have to remain unconscious. The one thing no man in any position of danger would desire another's prayers to do for him would be to make him think about himself. The job you have to do first, your pals second, yourself last.

That is the golden rule on any dangerous errand. The matter of life and death must be left to God, and there is something fine—however, and truly, the Christian philosopher may rule out luck—in the soldier's simple philosophy, "Well, if it comes, it comes; and if my number's on this shell, it'll hit me, and if it isn't, it won't!" There is something finer still in Donald Hankey's rallying cry to his men, "Come on, men;

---

<sup>15</sup> *The Church in the Furnace*, pp. 396-7. The Macmillan Company.

## CAN WE PRAY ABOUT WAR?

if you're wounded it's Blighty, and if you're killed it's the resurrection!"

Listen to these lines. You may call them doggerel, but there's a fine spirit in them and they are relevant to our theme. It is Studdert Kennedy's poem called, "Prayer Before an Attack."<sup>16</sup>

"It ain't as I 'opes 'E'll keep me safe  
While the other blokes goes down,  
It ain't as I wants to leave this world  
And wear an 'ero's crown.  
It ain't for that as I says my prayers  
When I goes to the attack,  
But I pray that whatever comes my way  
I may never turn me back.  
I leaves the matter o' life and death  
To the Father who knows what's best,  
And I prays that I still may play the man  
Whether I turns east or west.  
I'd sooner it were east, ye know,  
To Blighty and my gal Sue.  
I'd sooner be there, wi' the gold in 'er 'air,  
And the skies be'ind all blue.  
But still I pray I may do my bit,  
And then, if I must turn west,  
I'll be unashamed when my name is named,  
And I'll find a soldier's rest."

So pray for your nation and your loved one and yourself, as one who believes that prayer opens the sluice gates through which—by His own eternal decrees—the power and love of God the Infinite sweep into this little backwater we call life on earth. And at the end of your prayer say, "Nevertheless not what I will but what Thou wilt." Here is the model prayer, whatever happens to us:

"Our Father in Heaven,  
May Thy name be hallowed,  
Thy Kingdom come,  
Thy will be done  
On earth, as in Heaven. Amen."

---

<sup>16</sup> *Rough Rhymes of a Padre*, p. 28. Hodder & Stoughton.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CAN GOD VINDICATE HIMSELF?

God can vindicate Himself if His finally undefeatable purpose runs through life and if its final consummation justifies all the agony through which man must pass to reach the goal.

Obviously, that is bound to be a matter of faith, for our little minds cannot guess what the goal is, save to call it "blessed," or "worthiness for a life of communion with God." We should never dream, at the theater, of judging a play at the end of the first few minutes of it. We must not judge this strange drama played out on this earth, in human history—which Mark Twain called "a rather discreditable incident on one of the minor planets"—before the end.

Gheyselinck says that if a cinematograph film of the history of the earth were to be produced, and if that film were to last twenty-four hours—from midnight to midnight—then the first twelve hours of that film would show a history not yet discovered, and *man would not appear until the last five seconds of the film.* Get Hitler's activities into that perspective!

We must take comfort and strengthen our faith by remembering that everything points to purposeful activity running through every part of the universe. This seems to me one of the most important clues to the meaning of things. I cannot stay now to deal with people who don't believe in God at all, nor can I adequately deal with people who don't believe that there is any purpose in life at all. I have met people who do not believe that there is any significance in anything. I am more than sorry for people like

## CAN GOD VINDICATE HIMSELF?

that at a time like this. Their horizon is just bounded by this life, their creed is materialism, they talk a good deal about luck, their universe never extends beyond death, and I imagine that now they must have the sense that their little philosophy of life is breaking down on top of them. It makes this universe a madhouse, if nothing has any significance at all. I suppose they mean that the loveliness of flowers and the dawn over the hills, and friendship and love and sacrifice and heroism and endurance do not mean any more than the water in which you wash up the dinner things. If there is no meaning, no significance in life, then, of course, there is no point in trying to think things out, for our thinking has no significance either. There are no real abiding values. They are not rooted in the indestructible, immortal nature of things, because there is no such thing as indestructibility or immortality.

One of the few clues in a confusing and difficult world is this, that if you posit God at all, He would not be worth calling by that name unless, woven right through the texture of His universe, there were a thread of purpose and a meaning.

I believe that could be proved from history. I believe that as you take a large view, that could be proved. History is, in a sense, His story. It carries His meanings for those who will listen. I believe it could be proved from science if scientists would permit themselves to set out their facts from that point of view. One of the clues is that research in every department of scientific activity shows that facts found in one sphere fit those of another. It is a *uni*-verse. The structure of the flower involves the structure of the bee. You make a study of the life of the bee, the body of the bee, and you find that it doesn't make sense

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

apart from the flower.' You study the flower. Why is it arranged like this? It doesn't make sense without the bee. Two parts of the universe fit together. All parts fit together. The love of God and the possibility of war. It is a *universe* and truth in one.

But there is a line of evidence that is more impressive than that. If man is in any sense made in the image of God, then God cannot have qualities which are less than those qualities which man possesses. Without question I believe that God is personal, partly because I conceive personality as the richest endowment of man. God may have a quality which cannot be described by that term, God may be supra-personal, but He is at least personal, not less than that. It is the joy of any personality to be purposeful. What a joy it is to plan ahead! Man refuses to be pushed and prodded by mere circumstance. He says, I am going to take the wheel and direct the forces I encounter.

If that is true in human nature, you cannot conceive a God who is willing to sit in His universe and let the world go as it chooses; a kind of absentee God, letting the world get out of hand, running amok, getting out of His control.

If you will allow purposefulness in God, I want to go on and say that surely it is persistent. When they make a railway cutting, you have noticed that in a very short time the sides become grown over again. It is as though Nature, in a way, resents the gash, but then says, "Yet still we can make it beautiful," and she goes on to make sure that flowers will blossom there on the sides of the gash—flowers which frequently would not have blossomed if the gash had not been made.

We used to be very interested in India by a certain

## CAN GOD VINDICATE HIMSELF?

creeper. You could plant it in the middle of a field, and if you put a stick up in the ground, the creeper would turn toward it and, in time, would reach it and climb up it. As the creeper lay there on the ground, creeping toward the stick, it used to be a common habit to move the stick and put it somewhere else. In time the creeper would move toward the stick. Down there on that low level of life there is purposefulness.

Indeed, we have all seen the swallows gathering on the telegraph wires; they are getting ready, the time has come and little whispers are coming to the bird's mind. The babies go off first, and then their mothers and fathers, and in the case of tens of thousands of unnoticed adventures, two and a half ounces of courage and trust will launch itself over three thousand miles of sea and come back next year to that very same nest under the eaves of the village church. Break the nest, and the swallow will build another; take away her eggs, and she will lay some more; rob her of her mate, and she will pine away; imprison her, and when the urge comes she will beat herself against the bars until she is exhausted. There is a call, a voice, right throughout nature; you cannot quite defeat it, it is so persistent. Can that purpose be destroyed? I think the answer is that in nature it can, but nature herself is so prodigal that her prodigality is a manifestation of the idea of purpose. We are told that if all the herrings' eggs became herrings, the North Sea would be solid with fish! A great number of flower-seeds are wasted. Nature is persistent. I was told by a friend of mine who grows tomatoes in Guernsey that if you gave him one tomato and every seed in it became a plant, and every plant bore a normal crop, then, in three generations of planting and gathering fruit,

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

every inhabitant of the earth could be presented with a tomato! What a thrill! Such power in nature suggests a persistent purpose.

Now, when you get to man in the ascending development of life, purposefulness has become spiritual. It has not ceased to be physical, it has taken on a new realm that is spiritual. And although religion is not an instinct, although it is a faculty, it is a universal faculty. It may be just the worshiping of a tree or some hideous idol, it may be some queer kind of animism, but as soon as you get to man you get a purposefulness that is spiritual. There is not one race, not one tribe, without a religion, and the essence of religion is purposefulness, and when purposefulness has become spiritual, it is indestructible. All through the world no persecution, no repression, no force, no materialism, no wars, have ever been able to get out of man that terrific urge of purposefulness toward the spiritual goal. Russia has not become pagan, she has only thrown over a quack religion; Germany is passing through a pagan phase. But no power can eradicate from man's heart that tremendous purposefulness which is spiritual.

I do not believe, then, that the indestructible spiritual purposefulness which I see in man has no corresponding reality in God. It seems unreasonable to me that if man is what he is, God has no plan or a plan that can be ultimately defeated, say by Hitler, who appears on earth and disappears in what—in God's perspective—is the fraction of a second, a spark passing up the chimney, a "vapor that appeareth for a very little time and then vanisheth away."

Frankly, can you imagine God, the majestic, the eternal, the Creator of this marvelous universe of which we can only guess so little, wringing His hands

## CAN GOD VINDICATE HIMSELF?

at what has happened and saying, "Oh, dear, I never counted on this; now all my plans are defeated"?

It is hard to emphasize one aspect of the Divine Nature without denying another. I believe God comes down into the detail of our life in a way that is beyond our knowing, so that not a sparrow falleth to the ground without Him, but I also believe that, as far as His ultimate and glorious plans are concerned, He is no more defeated by this war than the father of a family would feel that all his plans for his children's careers—involving, shall we say, Cambridge, and training for the medical profession—were defeated and ruined because, while they were very little boys, they quarreled and fought one evening on the hearthrug as to which of them should have the only remaining banana on the dish.

God won't turn back and give us up and wash His hands of us. He is marching on. His purposes are too great for Him to cry the retreat, and His resources are too vast.

"He hath sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat,  
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment seat,  
O be swift, my soul, to answer Him, be jubilant, my feet,  
For God is marching on."<sup>2</sup>

It is natural that in the great troubles, national and personal, which threaten most of us we should turn back to the book of Job, a great drama which was written about 450 b. c., to prove that although suffering and sin are so closely connected that sin will bring suffering, somehow to somebody somewhere, you must never argue backward and try to prove that the special sufferings of any person are the direct result of his sins.

---

<sup>2</sup> Julia Ward Howe.

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

Further, teaches the drama, you must never suppose that calamity means that evil is winning, or that fighting for character isn't worth the effort, or that God has lost control of His world. You must, rather, believe that, in a world constituted as this is, evil is bound to come,<sup>2</sup> but that it only has the *appearance* of power. It is not only true to say that *behind* the appearances God is working, for He is using what appears to have no message, save that of evil, for His own purposes. We sometimes say that *behind* the clouds the sun is shining, as if the clouds were wholly without purpose save that of depressing us—but God will *use* the clouds, though they burst with rain to our discomfiture, to cause growth and development on the earth.

So this great drama of Job, one of the greatest works of art in the literature of any land at any epoch, bursts out finally in two triumphant declarations: "I know that my Vindicator liveth,"<sup>3</sup> and, "I know that thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of thine can be restrained."<sup>4</sup>

The earlier is the better-known passage, and it is worth while to paraphrase it a little more fully than the restrained language of the Revised Version.

You will notice that the sentence begins, "But I know . . ." And that "but" is important. The pronoun that follows it is emphatic. "I know." It is as though Job is saying: "You can say what you like. I know appearances are against me. I've got leprosy. I've lost all my possessions. My friends have turned against me. . . . But, in spite of all, I *know* that my Vindicator (or Redeemer) liveth."

---

<sup>2</sup> Observe what Jesus said, "It must needs be that offenses come." Matt. 18. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Job 19. 25.

<sup>4</sup> Job 42. 2.

## CAN GOD VINDICATE HIMSELF?

The Hebrew word for "Redeemer" or "Vindicator" (*go-el*) is interesting. It refers, in Jewish usage, to one who was next of kin or who came in at a crisis of trouble to redeem a friend from bondage, or to pay his debts, or even carry out a blood vengeance—to do anything to clear a loved one's name.

It is important to be clear in our minds what "vindication" means. This man Job is represented by his alleged friends as having been a fool. He serves God. He disciplines his life; and for what?—Nothing. Those who, when calamity overtakes them, always say, "What have I done to deserve this?" should read this play. Job searches his life. He can't think of anything. Nor can his friends, though they pretend to do so. They tell him that if there is a God at all, He's a poor sort of God. He can't have any kind of power, for look at the terrible things that have happened to His servant Job. The torture is long drawn out in the play.

Then Job bursts forth. "I may be a dying man," he says, "but I know that my Vindicator—the One who will clear my name and show the whole earth that I was not deluded in believing on Him—liveth, even though I die. And He will stand up—like the Advocate He is—at the last." The word used for "stand up" is a legal word, used of one who intervenes in a lawsuit to defend a client, a "Daniel come to judgment," and the phrase, "at the last," means "at the last moment," like one who comes at a dramatic last minute to save the situation.

The phrase "upon the dust" may mean the dust of Job's body after he is dead. It may mean "when all is turned to dust." But I have wondered whether it may mean "upon the dust you have all kicked up against me with your specious arguments against

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

God"! He will stand upon it, trample all arguments against Him under His feet. "And," Job continues, "after my skin hath been destroyed, after my enemies have done their worst, after the last attack has been made upon me, yet *apart from my flesh*," not "*in my flesh*," as the old Version had it, but "away from," "*apart altogether from my flesh, I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself*," or, rather, "*whom I shall see to be on my side*," and "*my eyes shall behold and not as a stranger*," or, rather, "*my eyes will recognize as the Eternal God whom I have served*. He is not a stranger but my Everlasting Friend."

Here is a picture which may help. A celebrated surgeon is traveling with his very young son on holiday in a dangerous part of China. They are attacked by robbers and captured. In the bandits' lair one of their number lies dangerously ill. An operation is performed by the surgeon, who is without his instruments, on the unconscious body of a bandit, and it is done largely with the bandit's own knife. The surgeon's young son watches. The robber is bandaged, and the gratitude of the thieves is such that the surgeon and his son are set free. But the boy doesn't see the robber's recovery, does not learn of it until long after.

Now, what is the boy to make of it? The long knife is plunged by his father into the body of an unconscious man held down on the ground. . . . Might not the boy creep away dismally and say, "I never knew my Dad was the sort of man who would cut the body of an unconscious man on the ground. I can't believe in him any more"? And perhaps all that the father could do would be to say, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." And it would be a long time after. For the boy would

## CAN GOD VINDICATE HIMSELF?

have to be a medical student himself to understand *all* that had been done that day.

Yet as father and son journeyed together in loving companionship, might not the boy say, "Well, I can't understand, but I *know* my Dad's a good chap, and one of these days he will explain things to me"?

Now, the illustration breaks down at an important point, because the surgeon *willed* the operation, and God certainly did not will this war. But it may be useful to show how that, just as the surgeon *used* a weapon of evil, made for destruction, to accomplish a healing which itself, to a small, terrified boy looking on, looked like destruction, so God can *use* the fearful weapon of war, made by man for an evil purpose, in surgical work which itself looks like nothing but destruction, but which *can* be used to cut out the cancerous growths of selfishness from the souls of nations.

So the Cross, planned by hearts that hated, remains the strongest means of ending hate the world has ever seen; made by evil, it delivers from evil, made in fear, it saves from fear. The Cross was made by man, and, like a bandit's dagger, it was made to kill; but in God's hands it is as a sharp surgical knife, which, more than any other instrument, has been used to cut out hate and pride and selfishness from the heart of humanity.

Surely, that *is* God's way again and again. The Kingdom of God has repeatedly been furthered by means which belong to the kingdom of evil. God doesn't move behind the clouds only: He uses the clouds too. Only so is He the Vindicator.

This message I only realized myself on reading a book called *The Paradox of the World*, by one who has greatly influenced and helped my thinking, Prin-

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

cipal John Oman, of Westminster College, Cambridge.

Survey, in imagination, the scope of evil. How does God deal with wickedness? It seems so often to triumph. Wicked, unscrupulous, and selfish men seem so often to occupy the "high places." Their wickedness seems so often to win. The righteous and lowly and loving people seem so often to be trodden upon. Are we, in thinking all this out, and trying to "justify the ways of God to men," to suppose that after death God merely punishes wickedness and rewards the righteous? If so, it seems inadequate. For what reward in another life can "make up" for some of the things that happen in this? Hitler, if he were punished in a flaming hell for all eternity, could not make amends for the wrongs he has inflicted in Czechoslovakia and Poland, to say nothing of his crimes against the Jews. Hitler's soul in anguish will not restore the happiness of one Jewish child, so ruthlessly shattered, or heal the sorrow of one Polish village, or put right what has so grievously been put wrong.

Let me in a few sentences state the truth which I want to express.

God wants men to be His *agents*; His fellow workers, co-operating with Him as fully as our vision of His purposes and our own dedication allow. None of us is so weak or useless that he cannot be caught up into the Divine plans and consciously and usefully work for the Divine ends.

BUT—every one of us will be used. If we are not used of our own consent and volition and glad willingness as agents, we shall be used as instruments, even if we be set on an evil course. We shall be blind to this fact, no doubt. We shall imagine we are achieving our own goal. In the end we shall find we have been tools in the hand of God. The cutting

## CAN GOD VINDICATE HIMSELF?

edge, on which we pride ourselves, our cleverness or astuteness or wit, or, indeed, dogged perseverance, we shall find cut His pattern, not ours, and in a real sense did His work, not ours. We cannot prevent God using us, even though we may be broken in the using and cast aside to be made again after we have been used.

We find this idea is as old as the Old Testament. The brutal Assyrian and the other disturbers of Israel, the enemy nations around, were only tools in the hand of the Lord, turned to the purposes of a holy God. He maketh even the "wrath of man" to "praise" Him.<sup>5</sup> We read in the first book of the Bible how Joseph's brothers, in jealous spite, did their very utmost to murder him. After their father's death they were terrified lest Joseph would wreak vengeance on them. But these are the words Joseph spoke to them. "As for you, ye meant evil against me, but God meant it for good."<sup>6</sup>

Let there be no mistake. God longs for goodness in all men. Evil causes pain to God, of which we can only catch a glimpse when we turn our eyes to the Cross of Christ. God desires goodness, and, short of coercion, is working in every possible way for goodness in men's hearts. But when men do evil, God is not defeated. He is wounded, and to some extent, perhaps, hindered. But He uses their evil and makes it contribute to an end which is His, not theirs.

He does not meet wickedness only by what we sometimes call retribution or vengeance, although both those words represent mighty facts in God's economy. "No cruelty of the mighty toward the feeble ever worked agony for the feeble any more cer-

---

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 76. 10.

<sup>6</sup> Genesis 50. 20.

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

tainly than it worked ruin for the strong." That is true. No one ever "gets away" with wickedness. "Vengeance is mine, *I will repay, saith the Lord.*" Forgiveness itself, while it gloriously restores relationship, does not negate the result of sin. Sin always has to be paid for in some way or other, and forgiveness, while it alters the nature of penalty from retribution to cleansing discipline, does not *cancel* or obliterate penalty and the result of sin, which, so often, others bear beside the sinner.

Perhaps we can illustrate. I am told that we owe the discovery of blotting-paper to the "fault" of a certain worker in a paper factory. He forgot one of the chemicals used in the making of writing paper. His employer was shown the paper and, for writing purposes, it was useless. But the way in which the ink ran on the paper suggested to him a new use for this type of paper, a far better use than the fine sand which was used previously to dry the written page. The carelessness of the employee was not willed by the employer, but it was capitalized by him beyond any vision of such use which the employee had.

Let us try to illustrate again.

Here is Alexander the Great (356-323 b. c.), conquering land after land, people after people, in ways which certainly do not square with anything we could describe as the will of God. Yet God used the crime of this man's inordinate ambition and relentless invasion. Wherever Alexander went, the Greek language was spoken and roads were laid down, through both of which traveled afterward the gospel of Christ. Alexander's conquests were used as means to spread that medium which carried Christianity to the ends of the earth. It is pleasing to think that the toil of a

## CAN GOD VINDICATE HIMSELF?

lowly slave, making a road through difficult mountain country and working under the lash of one of Alexander's slave-drivers, was not a contribution to the ambitious designs of a ruthless monarch, but the preparation of the way of the Lord, making the paths straight for the feet of those who came bringing the gospel of peace, three hundred years later.

"He maketh even the wrath of man to praise him." Caesar's ruthless ambitions stood for some kind of law. Knowledge was widespread. It was from Rome that missionaries came to England. God used Caesar's ambition to bring the gospel to Britain. "He maketh even the wrath of men to praise him."

Turn from these ancient conquests to the one most poignantly in our minds, the ruthless conquest of Poland by one who roughly thrust aside all the sanctity of treaties and the expressed opinion of half the world, and, with all the devilry of modern inventions, ravaged the land of a proud, independent people with the modern mechanical devices of war.

No one can say what will happen. We must harbor no thoughts of retribution. "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." But because I believe in God, I am quite sure that the sufferings of every man, woman, and child in Poland, every mother's broken heart, every outraged home, every ravished village, every act of strong cruelty and conquering evil and enthroned shamefulness, is remembered by God, and will be used by Him in His plan, not Hitler's, and that vengeance will surely come to all who had evil in their hearts. Not that in the nature of God there is anything to compare with the angry plea for reprisals which fills our own hearts. There is *nothing* in God's heart but love and justice. But God has made His world in such a way that vengeance surely

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

follows. Love can be a fearsome thing. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God"—whose name is Love; a love that is not weak or sentimental, but utterly and awfully holy, just and righteous.

Some of us had these same thoughts in our minds when Mussolini attacked a primitive people to bring "civilization" to them in bombing planes equipped with poisonous gas. Mussolini appeared to win. But if sometimes we see in the mind's eye Mussolini standing on the veranda of the Palazzo Venezia shaking his fist, as it were, at the whole world, a picture of the bullying might of enthroned tyranny, and see also in our vision the Negus, bowing in prayer at the tomb of Christ, a lonely, dethroned and beaten man, we may recall another representative of Rome called Pilate, bragging of his powers of life and death, and hearing Jesus say this: "Thou wouldst have no power against me except it were given thee from above."<sup>7</sup> The very power to do incomparable evil is a gift of God, and, *in spite of all the intention of the evildoer*, will be used to further God's purposes, even though we cannot see how, at the time.

Pilate and Jesus, who had the power? Pilate thought it was his that day. But history has judged between them. In what looked like a defeat on a Cross, Jesus did more to further God's purposes than a proud Roman, of whom—but for the Man he crucified—the modern world would not even have heard. Give God time! Trust Him in the dark, and every seeming victory of evil will be but an instrument in the hand of God to achieve His will. As Principal Oman says, "Without a trust that God has a purpose He can make it serve, human cruelty dethrones for us

---

<sup>7</sup> John 19. 11.

## CAN GOD VINDICATE HIMSELF?

either God's goodness or His omnipotence; and one is a mockery without the other."

Do you remember how the saintly Stephen was beaten to death with huge stones? Standing watching was Saul of Tarsus, the young cultured Pharisee. He was minding the clothes of those who killed Stephen. He remained until the end. Stephen had been guilty of blasphemy. The punishment of blasphemy is death by stoning. Everything was in order.

Yet I believe Saul's mind was in conflict. Do you notice what happened in Saint Luke's narrative in Acts? Saul immediately went out and persecuted the Church. He "laid waste the church," says Saint Luke, "entering into every house, and dragging men and women, committed them to prison." Why? Oh, partly because you always do a thing more violently when, in your heart of hearts, you know that you ought not to be doing it at all. You *act* ferociously when you do not want to feel sensitively. "Let me get to work," we say, "and I shall get over my feelings." But Saul's feelings were too strong and too deep. Never before in Saul's experience had a man who was being stoned to death cried, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." What a religion! To die like that! Never before had a man prayed for his murderers—"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge"—never before, except—and probably Saul had witnessed it—when that same Jesus, on a Cross outside Jerusalem, had prayed, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

But mark this—*Every stone that beat down Stephen made a breach in the walls of the proud castle of the soul of Saul of Tarsus*, till the man fled, gathering the shroud of his righteousness round him, persecuting the Church that he might feel as he used to feel, secure in the enthusiasm of the old religion of his

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

fathers. But running toward Damascus, Jesus confronted this man. Saul surrendered. What was the good of running any more? The keys of the castle were handed over. *The stones in the hands of evil men for an evil purpose had fulfilled the purpose of a holy, loving God.* For here is Paul, the greatest missionary and Christian thinker the world has ever seen, who begins his letters like this: Paul, a *slave* of Jesus Christ.

But an objection has probably arisen already in someone's mind. If God thus uses evil, does it not weaken the challenge to do good? The answer is an emphatic "No!" The more emphatically do we hate evil, as we see how it must hurt a loving and righteous God and bring almost untold suffering upon the evildoer himself and upon those influenced by his evil deeds. We started with the assertion that God longs with a great and holy desire that we should be His willing and co-operating agents, not His blind and unwilling instruments.

This is a hard faith to achieve, but it is thrust upon us by a sense of God's nature and both man's wickedness and his worth. God will go to the Cross to win men from wickedness because He believes in man's worth, and the Cross must ever remain what Paul called it—a symbol of God's power. But remember that man's wickedness set that Cross up. God used man's wickedness for a purpose man never intended. Power?—it looked like weakness and defeat. But says Paul, "We preach Christ crucified." "For the word of the cross . . . unto us who are being saved, is the power of God." It is a measure both of the blessedness and the difficulty of the Kingdom of God that it can be furthered by means which belong to the kingdom of evil. And, indeed, we should be hopeless

## CAN GOD VINDICATE HIMSELF?

of God ever setting up His kingdom unless He could use that evil, which is so much commoner than good, as an instrument of His own purposes.

Let us remember this: "The greatest of us who seeks, by his own devices and in disregard for others, to achieve his own personal ambitions," and especially who becomes unkind and tyrannous in getting his own way, "will only make a little noise for a little time in our little world and then pass into oblivion with all his work turned to other ends than his own."<sup>8</sup> But the weakest who humbly follows the Master, trying to do His will and offering the lowliest service in the world, or just offering to God his little bit of suffering and pain, will be caught up into God's glorious purposes, know himself God's coworker and friend, add to the eternal treasure of goodness and share in all the gladness of the sons of God.

"I know," says Job, "that thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of thine can be restrained."

But *now* we cannot see so far; not far enough to put present events into our argument as an illustration. It all looks to us as if God were defeated, evil triumphant, the fight for goodness not worth making.

We need so badly the faith which Job showed in the hour of his deepest suffering, "I know that my Vindicator liveth," and the "I know" is the knowledge of faith.<sup>9</sup>

It is desperately hard in these days for many people to "have faith." You can't say to yourself, "Go to, I will now have a little faith." One remembers the illustration from that classic volume of theology called *Through the Looking Glass*. The Queen asserts that

\* Principal Oman, in *Paradox of the World*. Cambridge University Press.

\* I have worked this out in *Jesus and Ourselves*, p. 109. The Abingdon Press.

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

she is a hundred and one years, five months and one day old.

"I can't believe *that*," said Alice.

"Can't you?" said the Queen. "Try again; draw a long breath and shut your eyes."

And some would need to draw a very long breath and shut their eyes very tightly before they could believe that a world in which they have lost all that makes life most worth living is in the controlling hands of an Omnipotent and good God, and that He can bring it to *His* goal with nothing of value lost.

Yet however hard faith in a good God may be, let us think things out a bit further.

We must have some kind of faith. You can say, "I believe there is no God." Well, that is faith too. Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick once wrote down the startling sentence: "When Haeckel says that the creator is 'Cosmic Ether,' and when John says that 'God is love,' they both are making a leap of faith."<sup>10</sup> And he goes on to give us illustrations of those who put their faith elsewhere than in the God and Father of Jesus.

Carlyle speaks of "one huge, dead, immeasurable Steam-engine, rolling on, in its dead indifference, to grind me limb from limb."

Bertrand Russell says:

"Brief and powerless is man's life; on him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls, pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way; for Man, condemned today to lose his dearest, tomorrow himself to pass through the gate of darkness, it remains only to cherish, ere yet the blow falls, the lofty thoughts that ennable his little day."

---

<sup>10</sup> *The Meaning of Faith*, p. 8. The Abingdon Press.

## CAN GOD VINDICATE HIMSELF?

Voltaire called life "a bad joke" and was it not Omar who said,

"The world rolls round forever like a mill.  
It grinds out death and life and good and ill.  
It has no purpose, heart, or mind or will?"

We could go on quoting for a long time, but it is a melancholy business and settles nothing, for the radiant faith of the saints could be set over against it.

"I believe," said Stevenson, "in the ultimate decency of things; ay and if I woke in hell, should still believe in it."

Whittier sings:

"And in the maddening maze of things  
When tossed by storm and flood,  
To one fixed ground my spirit clings,  
I know that God is good."

Saint Paul says: "We *know* that all things work together for good to them that love God."

The question is, Who is right? Which kind of faith makes the most sense? For my part I am going to take my stand with Christ. If He is wrong, then where on earth can I find a greater authority, either in word or example, since, having taught the Fatherhood of God, even on His Cross, He still calls God "Father"?

I cannot believe that all the saints were deluded, since, if they were, their delusions are preferable to our sanity. Their madness would make the world a happier, safer, holier, lovelier place than all our bright intellectualism and clever discoveries have made it.

I cannot believe that goodness has no greater value and significance than badness, that courage is no finer than cruelty, that beauty has no greater ultimate

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

meaning than ugliness, that evil and sorrow and suffering are clues pointing to the meaninglessness and horror of life. I think they are deceptive appearances that frighten and mislead us.

Do you remember how Robert Louis Stevenson, facing death, wrote to a friend about an old woman whose ventriloquism had frightened the natives of Vailinia? He said:

"All the old women in the world might talk with their mouths shut and not frighten you or me, but there are plenty of other things that frighten us badly. And if we only knew about them, perhaps we should find them no more worthy to be feared than an old woman talking with her mouth shut. And the names of some of these things are Death and Pain and Sorrow."

Let me tell you a strange thing about a jackdaw. She builds her nest, as you know, sometimes, in an old ruin. To make the basis of the nest she brings twigs and drops them in some hole in the ruin. But in an old ruin frequently the small hole leads to a larger, and the twigs may drop right through into, say, the base of a church tower. The nest is never built, but the bird keeps bringing twigs and dropping them in. She never seems to have intelligence enough to know that nothing constructive is being done with all her costly labor.

Well, we may be like jackdaws. We may be bringing our little bits of heroism and sacrifice and pain and hardly discovered truth, and just dropping them into a hole in which nothing can ever come of them, where they are all wasted and count for nothing. What has happened, we may well ask, to all the sacrifices made in the last War? Where are

## CAN GOD VINDICATE HIMSELF?

all the daily prayers of the million members of the League of Prayer and Service? Where is the result of all the striving of the saints?

But I don't believe that anything is lost. I believe that there is Someone working below, out of sight, building something beautiful.

"From my frustration make me sure  
That Thou, my God, art He  
Who buildest something to endure,  
From what seems loss to me."

I believe that there is nothing God will not use, however fragmentary or even mistaken, to do that constructive building which is in His plan. With Tennyson my faith is

"That nothing walks with aimless feet,  
And not one life shall be destroyed,  
Or cast as rubbish to the void,  
When God hath made the pile complete."

"Your sorrow shall be *changed* into joy," not just followed by it. Your twigs shall prove to be the foundation of some worthy thing, though you may never live to see it.

What else can Saint Paul's words mean—"We know that *all* things work together for good to them that love God"?

It is easy to see that God can use sanctified success, good health, opportunities for influence; but the glory of the gospel is that they are "not a whit more friendly to our lasting and supremely worthy good than the most painful, most uncertain, most calamitous effects."<sup>11</sup> They are not to be sought on that account necessarily. They bring pain to God and men. But if they can honorably be

---

<sup>11</sup> Oman, *The Paradox of the World*, p. 113. Cambridge University Press.

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

avoided, they are not appointed as our lot. If they cannot be honorably avoided, they are appointed for our lot. They may be opposed and overcome. That may be God's intention. But if they have to be endured, God guarantees that they can become as truly positive gain as what we call His benefits.

A doctrine of Providence which supposes that God can only build up His Kingdom with those elements which we call good is woefully inadequate. That is faith in God in terms only of beneficence. God's way of vindication will be to show us that every conceivable form of evil can be utilized for His purpose, as the Cross of Christ forever shows, where "even death, with every conceivable accompaniment of shame and agony and visible defeat, is turned into the doing of God's will and the revelation of His pardoning love and the manifestation and victory of His righteousness and peace."

That evil, costly to God and to man, that suffering and pain and disappointment and frustration, God will use to further His purposes, not the purposes of evil. That is how He vindicates His nature; His power and His love. We cannot often see "how," though we have both experienced it and seen it at the Cross, but nothing less than that is a vindication of all that looks to us a denial of a loving, omnipotent Being.

Because we cannot see "how," faith is demanded. It could not be otherwise. No human mind can comprehend the plans of God. But such a faith makes sense. It doesn't reduce the universe to an asylum, as the alternative does. It is a faith supported—as I think—by reason. It has Jesus on its side.

It is a gamble, of course, as faith must always be,

## CAN GOD VINDICATE HIMSELF?

but I invite you to this form of gambling, "betting your life there's a God," as Donald Hankey expressed it. "I am God's gambler," cried Kagawa, "for Him I have wagered my last mite." "The only faith that makes a Christian is that which casts itself on God, for life or death," says Martin Luther.

What a golden thread of courageous faith it is that runs throughout the Bible! I *know* that my Vindicator liveth,<sup>12</sup> I know that thou canst do all things.<sup>13</sup> Israel shall cry unto me, my God, we *know* thee.<sup>14</sup> Now *know* I that the Lord saveth his anointed.<sup>15</sup> I *know*, O Lord, that thy judgments are right.<sup>16</sup> For the Lord God will help me; therefore have I not been confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I *know* that I shall not be ashamed.<sup>17</sup> We *know* that all things work together for good to them that love God.<sup>18</sup> I *know* him whom I have believed.<sup>19</sup>

"Know" may seem a strong word for our pedestrian fumbling guess, but let us test it and try it out, let us live by it, and I believe that, with tens of thousands of others through all the ages for two thousand years, on all shores and under all skies, we too shall find that we are not confounded.

When you turn into your street tonight, you will find it darker than it used to be. But your experience of it in the old days, when it was brilliantly lighted, will mean that you can walk tonight in the darkness with more than a blind faith. You *know* it is the road that leads you home. And when you get home, there will be a welcome and light—all the light you need. Life is very dark for very many just now. But let us

---

<sup>12</sup> Job 19. 25.

<sup>14</sup> Psalm 119. 75.

<sup>13</sup> Job 42. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Isaiah 50. 7.

<sup>14</sup> Hosea 8. 2.

<sup>16</sup> Romans 8. 28.

<sup>15</sup> Psalm 20. 6.

<sup>17</sup> 2 Timothy 1. 12.

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

continue to walk in His ways. It is the road which leads us home. And even if the darkness never lifts until we reach the portals of the house with many mansions, there will be a welcome there at eventide, and Light at last. For the glory of the Lord shall be our Light and the lamp thereof is the Lamb."

"O Lord, in Thee, in Thee have I trusted,  
Let me never, let me never be confounded."

## CHAPTER IX

### THE VALUES WAR CANNOT TOUCH

IN these days of strain and uncertainty and peril, when the even course of the lowliest lives is to some extent upset, and when the strong, stable things seem to rock and lose their power to give us a sense of security, one of the most worth-while things religion can do is to help men see, and rest in, those primary things which cannot be shaken, and in a relation to which our minds and hearts can find security. But no man can put first things first until he is quite sure of what things really are first. At a time like this there is a chance that Christianity may be seen to be the one stable reality, a thing of the very first importance. For, as F. H. Bradley, whom Dean Inge described as "our greatest contemporary philosopher and no friend to orthodox Christianity," once said, "The man who demands a reality more solid than that of the religious consciousness knows not what he seeks."

In a sentence, my theme is this, "Take stock, not to find out what you've got in the shop, but to see whether you've got the price tickets on correctly."

For many years the world has been like a shop into which some mischief-maker has entered unobserved and changed the labels round, so that cheap things have had high price-labels attached to them, and really valuable things have been priced low.<sup>1</sup>

A sad awakening always follows, for men in need turn suddenly to realize on their possessions, and find that what they thought was of great value proves to

---

<sup>1</sup> I owe this figure to the Archbishop of York. *Christian Faith and Life.* Student Christian Movement Press, Ltd., p. 68.

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

be of little worth, and what they have disdained as worthless is of inestimable worth.

For example, to amass a large business has seemed to many the most desirable thing to do for years, and everything has been sacrificed for it. Some, one knows, have sacrificed everything—even moral scruples—for a title or some coveted position. In an hour of crisis both seem almost a liability. They mean so many worries and anxieties and inescapable responsibilities for which the *soul* is ill-equipped.

On the other hand, a quiet heart, the secret of serenity, the virtue of humility, the ideal of lowly and sometimes ill-rewarded service, ability to pray—these have seemed trivial. But in an hour of crisis we know them to be the fine gold of life. We wish we had hoarded more real treasure and let some other things go. We see now, we who have so long asked of life very different questions, like, “What shall I do to be happy?” “What shall I do to be comfortable?” “What shall I do now so that later I shall have to do nothing?” that these are less important than the question we scorned, “What shall I do to be saved?”

For centuries the world has been mistaught in regard to the assessment of “Values.”

The old Greek and Roman teachers put the wrong price-tickets on things. They always regarded any kind of misfortune, like poverty or pain, as an evidence of the anger of the gods. And the Hebrew prophets—as many of the psalms indicate—regarded wealth and long life as tokens of the divine approval. Job comes out of his trials with the reward of an enormous menagerie of sheep and oxen, camels and she-asses.<sup>2</sup> The reward of honoring father and mother is “that thy days may be long,” and one of God’s highest gifts is

<sup>2</sup> Job 42. 12-13.

## THE VALUES WAR CANNOT TOUCH

expressed in such phrases as, "With long life will I satisfy him."<sup>3</sup> Heaven itself was thought of in terms, not of depth, but of length of life.

It is only in the New Testament that the old labels are torn off and new ones affixed. "Riches," while not condemned, and even regarded as a loan from God constituting the opportunity of, and challenge to, devoted service and useful influence, are regarded as hindrances to the Kingdom rather than as helps.<sup>4</sup> And the length of a life is seen to be irrelevant. The quality of life is everything. The Lord of Life, poor and alone and in agony, is crucified before He reaches middle age. The Cross is the symbol of complete failure as far as merely worldly standards and values go.

Yet a "valuation" of what Christ stands for is seen in the words of Lecky, who, while not a believing Christian, wrote in his *History of European Morals* as follows:

The Christ character "has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments and conditions; it has been not only the highest pattern of virtue but the strongest incentive to its practice; and has exercised so deep an influence that it may truly be said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists."

What do we really mean by a "value" when we speak of a "sense of values"?

We mean, I suggest, something that has worth in itself, a worth-whileness which is ultimate. He who has his sense of values right has something which can

---

\* Psalm 91. 16.

\* See Mark 10. 25.

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

never be taken away from him, something in which the mind and heart can find rest, something which has not merely worthwhileness as a means to an end, but is an end in itself, something which can never be destroyed or overthrown, whatever happens.

We shall understand better, perhaps, if I mention some false values.

Money is one. There are situations in which to have money is no help at all. A very rich, very unhappy man makes us see this clearly. I can call nothing a "value" which is useless whatever emergency may arise.

Popularity, fame, worldly success, high social position are just worthless in some emergencies, though they carry high-priced labels in ordinary life. They can be means to valuable ends, but they must never be regarded as ends in themselves.

Other so-called values are what I call temporary values. They are worth having for their own sake. Knowledge is one. Athletic prowess is one. Physical health is one. Ability to play or sing or talk wittily or add to the healthy laughter in the world is a good thing in itself, but these things are not the highest values. They do not give that "this-is-what-I'm-after-feeling," which, I think, is the test of an absolute value.

Let us turn to the absolute values. They could be all summarized under the headings, beauty, truth or goodness—indeed, they could all be included under the one term, "beauty," for "truth" is beauty in terms of knowledge and "goodness" is beauty in terms of character, but the words may seem cold to some. Let us speak of them in a more homely way.

On the evening of July 28, 1914, after a day when his peace efforts were crumbling in his hand, Earl Grey sought composure at a musical party at Lady Glenconner's, where Mr. Campbell McGinnis sang

## THE VALUES WAR CANNOT TOUCH

some Handel songs, which, at his request, were repeated. The singer, who had noticed the ashen misery of Grey's face, went home and impulsively wrote to him as follows:

"DEAR SIR EDWARD,

I am so glad you liked the music, and if the world is going to become a howling wilderness won't you let me sing to you again?"<sup>5</sup>

For some days the letter was unanswered, but early in the morning of August 5, a few hours after the outbreak of war, Grey wrote the following note, which he sent round by a Foreign Office messenger.

"DEAR MR. McGINNIS,

I am touched by your letter, and will keep it by me, in case there is a time when I can come. I love Handel's music, and it does me good. Europe is in the most terrible trouble it has ever known in civilized times, but no one can say what will be left at the end. But Handel's music will survive."

In a letter to Mrs. Creighton, February 4, 1918, Earl Grey said:

"I think it is a good and wholesome check upon the horror caused by the war to think of the things that even the war cannot shake or alter. Great music loses none of its power, but it must be great like the *Messiah* or the *Beethoven Symphony*. I am sure those things have the eternal in them. The wonder of the stars and the sense of the beauty of the world remain too, unlimited, though I cannot

---

<sup>5</sup> *Life of Earl Grey*, G. M. Trevelyan.

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

enjoy looking at the sea here as I used to do now that it is filled with mines and submarines."

Dr. Walford Davies, in a recent wireless talk, told us how Beethoven wrote a quiet tune in his frail lodging on the very walls of Vienna when Napoleon was bombarding that city. Dr. Walford Davies played the tune over to us. It communicated serenity. It breathed an indescribable peace. It was of haunting loveliness.

There is the picture of a harassed man finding security in beauty—the beauty of music.

The same is true of the beauty on which the eye rests. A friend of mine used to solace himself by propping up on an easel, with a light falling upon it, a Japanese color-print. Gazing on it, he rested in beauty. However chafed his feelings, the loveliness of the picture brought him back to a sense of harmony with ultimate reality.

Whether it is beauty of sound or color or form, beauty which God made or which man overheard or oversaw and copied, there is something restful, eternal in it. Who does not know at least twenty lines of great poetry which, slowly repeated, speak of the eternal harmonies with which, for the moment, we may be out of tune?

No darkness is so gross that it can blot out light. The tiniest light can hold its own, pierce darkness and dispel some of it. What a job we have had to blot out light! Just as we thought we had dealt adequately with every window in the house, some lunatic has come to us and said, "Do you know there's a beam of light shining from the bathroom window?" and off we go again to look for a pin and a piece of brown paper. No mere darkness can stop light. And we

## THE VALUES WAR CANNOT TOUCH

know that whatever horrors darken the world, beauty will always remain, even if only a memory, in human minds, and if we could never see beauty again, the memory of beauty would keep us from being overwhelmed.

So, as a practical outcome of this, do not let your last thought at night be one of evil or horror or darkness. Don't let bad news on the wireless be your closing thought. Turn the mind to some scene of mountain, moor, or sea. Read some such book as *The Road-mender* (Fairless), *The Spirit of the Hills* (Smythe), *The Charm of Birds* (Grey), *The Shining Highway*, *Winter Journey* (Gee), *Letters to a Friend*, by Winifred Holtby; *Hebridean Altars*, by Alistair Maclean; some simple devotional book or a great biography. . . . Turn on a victrola record of some great sonata or nocturne or melody, so that you may say to yourself, "Beauty remains, and beauty is an expression of the mind of God." Beauty is God's lamp. And its light quiets.

"If I stoop  
Into a dark, tremendous sea of cloud,  
It is but for a time. I press God's lamp  
Close to my breast, its splendor, soon or late,  
Will pierce the gloom; I shall emerge one day."

When we send my pulpit flowers to the sick, we send a card with them, and on the card are printed, at my request, some significant words of Professor H. H. Farmer:

"Beauty is like a glance of love from a friend in the midst of a hostile crowd: a hand-pressure, a caress to those weighed down with the traffic of the market place; a word of appreciation to a man disengaged."

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

Let there be added a word from Rabindranath Tagore:

"Surrounded by the pomp and pageantry of worldliness . . . we still live in exile, while the insolent spirit of worldly prosperity tempts us with allurements. In the meantime the flower comes across with a message from the other shore and whispers in our ears: 'I am come. He has sent me. He will draw thee unto Him and make thee His own.' "

The flower—and the same is true of all beauty—speaks no message of insurance from hostility; for, as Jesus said, the lilies are cut down and thrust into the oven. What it does say—and Matthew 6 is not a pretty picture, it is an *argument*—is that God cares for you because He cares for things infinitely inferior to you; that the One who is in charge of the universe finds expression in the beauty of a rose; that the Heart that made *that* cannot be hostile and unfriendly, and that the hostility which is *allowed*, will pass away, having been God's instrument, never His agent, and one day the beauty of God's purposes will be revealed. The "glance" of the rose, if one may so put it, is no "lost angel of some ruined Paradise," but a messenger of hope from a Paradise still to be revealed.

"If I give you a rose," said Tertullian, "you won't doubt God any more." And, not beauty, *but your ability to recognize beauty*, in rose, or sunset, or dawn, in the quiet peace of the dreaming moors, in the splendor of breaking waves at the foot of an age-old cliff, in the song of the lark on a sunny morning, or the whisper of the wind among mysterious trees at dusk—that power to make response is one of God's secret allies in your heart winning you to allegiance with the values that abide. Through that response

## THE VALUES WAR CANNOT TOUCH

His Spirit whispers to your spirit, amid all the hostilities of life, that you don't belong to life as life seems in the hideous evil around you. You are one with beauty, one with God, "a portion of the Eternal," as Shelley said, "made one with Nature."

The same is true of truth. Mere darkness, we said, cannot put out a candle. Lies cannot defeat truth. It is one of the qualities of a "value" that it is indestructible. Rest your mind in the thought that truth will prevail. Lies may obscure it, hate distort it, fear suppress it, and those who speak truth may be crucified.

But truth is at last unconquerable.

Just as the truth about God will emerge from all men have said about Him, so the truth about life will emerge from all the warring theories and conflicting ideologies which tell us how it should be lived.

What happens to us, in a sense, doesn't matter; the truth will live on. Shells and bombs and poison gas cannot stop it.

When Professor John Cairns was presented in 1888 with his own portrait by the Synod of the United Presbyterian Church, he said this: "Life and labor cannot last long with me. But I would seek to the end to work for Christian truth, and, under the weight of all anxieties and failures and the shadow of separation from loved ones, I would repeat the confession which Time only confirms: 'In Thee, O Lord, have I trusted. I shall never be put to confusion.'

And when Andrew Melville was threatened by the Earl of Morton with violent death, he said, "Tush, my Lord, make these threats to your courtiers. It is all one to me whether I rot in the earth or in the air. *It is not in your power to hang or exile the truth.*"

Our recognition of Truth is an ally of God. What an amazing thing it is—and what an evidence of God—

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

that the spirit of man, if sufficiently unfettered from the bondage of tradition, or authority, or convention, or fear, or all of them together, will leap out in glad recognition of the truth!

It is not a perception which always comes with argument. Sometimes an apparently flawless argument will leave one cold, and an intuition for which one can give scant reason—and then frequently a reason made up afterward—bears all the authority of truth.

Something like that happened one day at the foot of Mount Hermon. Just as the rain soaks through Hermon's head, meets the hard rock, gathers until Hermon can hold it no longer, and then bursts out into the Jordan, a miracle of a river, thirty feet wide at its birth; so thoughts gathered in the mind of the rock-man Peter, thoughts about Jesus, until Peter the Jew, brought up in strict monotheism, could hold them no longer. Contrary to all argument, all the teaching of the rabbis from his youth up, there burst from his very soul an appreciation of the truth—"Thou art the Christ." And as no man can gather Jordan and put that river back in Hermon's heart, no man can tame truth or imprison her. Once she is out, all lives that touch her take her message.

So in this hostile world, with evil rampant and good at a discount; this strange fools' jumble sale, where the prices of things seem marked by a madman, so that what is precious is marked low and what is worthless is marked high, sometimes comes a flash of intuition, a gleam of a great truth, a truth you cannot destroy or imprison or tame or kill, but only acknowledge. As the old man selling lilies said to Christ in Masefield's play, *Good Friday*,

"Friend, it is over now—the passion, the tears, the pains,  
*Only the truth remains.*"

## THE VALUES WAR CANNOT TOUCH

One of the most liberating truths in the world is that we belong to God, are part of His nature, His closest kin in the universe; all the values tell us so. And that recognition sends us on our way more bravely. It is one of God's secret allies in the soul, with whom we exchange a greeting at every bit of insight, every time an inward certainty of the nature of reality dawns upon the soul.

I wish there were space to work the matter out. For under that heading of truth I would include the august march of law, moral, and psychological, and physical, the truth about harmony, the reliability of God's universe, the fact that the whole universe stamps the eternal values as unbreakable.

“For the everlasting right  
The silent stars are strong.”

Goodness is another ultimate value. A few years ago a brilliant scholar, whose life had been dedicated to God, dived into a river to save an idiot boy. The boy was saved, the scholar drowned. The scholar might have done any number of lovely things—missionary, professor, statesman, doctor, preacher. . . . The idiot boy remained an idiot boy.

Yet no one argued that it was wrong for the young scholar to give his life for another. No one said the scholar should have paused and reckoned the matter up, as to which life would do more good in the world.

What a strange world it is! It seems so hard and hostile, and materialistic and selfish, and then something like that happens, and men smile at one another, and women's eyes shine with unshed tears, and in their hearts folk whisper and say to themselves: “It was right that he should dive into that water. It was a

---

\* Frederick Lucian Hosmer.

## THINKING ALOUD IN WAR-TIME

lovely thing to do." In a word of Christ, full of insight, "it behoved him so to suffer." And as we thus recognize the strange, mysterious lure of sheer goodness, we know that something in us echoes to that. We belong somehow to that scale of values. Our true life is in that world. Life looks often like a concentration camp, with much enthroned violence and little justice, but our recognition of the goodness in a good deed is God's spirit witnessing with our spirit that we are children of the God who is all goodness.

And wherever men find goodness, they respond to it eventually, whether it be revealed as tenderness, or sympathy, or faith in human nature, or love. The response is often delayed, but it comes, and when it comes, its recognition is a witness that all men are the sons of God. One of our novelists tells of a lumber-camp full of rough men, into which came, by a curious chance, a little child. The life of the whole camp was changed to some extent by the touch of a little child. Men recognized in the child's innocence and purity a kinship that was almost overlaid by the rough life they lived. Their recognition of simple goodness was God's secret ally in their own hearts witnessing that they were sons of God. Whatever happens, goodness is better and stronger than evil, and the lovely virtues linked with goodness share its own value. Courage is better than cowardice, kindness is better than cruelty, humility better than pride, love is better than selfishness, friendship is better than hostility. We must let our minds dwell on the things that stand, the abiding values that war cannot touch.

I find a queer kind of rest of mind in these days by thinking that if the worse comes to the worst—the worst imaginable—I *know* that my sense of values is right and that God will preserve these values in His

## THE VALUES WAR CANNOT TOUCH

world. Possessions, loved ones, life itself may be taken, and many dear human dreams be smashed, but the values remain, and as Canon F. R. Barry once said:

“The only power that can exorcise the demons of savagery and fear which haunt mankind today is the rebirth of Christian conviction that the world belongs to the God of truth and love, that the souls of men are precious in His sight, that spiritual values are real, that righteousness and peace are attainable because they are rooted in the eternal goodness.”

There may be an end here, “a last sunset and the clasp of hands through tears,” but, in another world, life will go on, and the values will be there, however different things may be. The values will still be the precious things, the things that go on, the things that belong to God’s own nature and ours, and no power of evil, no violence, no devilry, can ever destroy them.

And I am supremely thankful that in the friendship of loved ones—even if taken from me for a time—in the beauty of poetry and music and the loveliness of nature, and in the thrill of the tiny bit of truth I have seen, in all that Christ was and is, I know I have seen a vision of the real nature of God. In any moment of insight, whether through the love of a child, or the song of a bird, or the magic of a poem, or a trusted friendship, I’ve felt as though I were looking through the chinks of the universe that *seems*, to the fair glory of the universe which forever *is*. *That*, not war and misery and pain, that is what God is like.

And the end of all being is to be one with God. That is the greatest “value” of all. The end of this strange, lovely, terrifying journey we call life is His breast. And when we meet there we shall find that nothing of value has been lost.











